

School of Psychology and Speech Pathology

Deconstructing Divergent Constructions of Illicit Drug Use and Drug-Using Subjects: Understanding Enduring Stigma and Marginalisation

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**This thesis is presented for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (Clinical Psychology)
of
Curtin University**

May 2016

Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) – updated March 2014. The proposed research study received human research ethics approval from the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00262), Approval Number # HR 187/2005

Acknowledgements

This journey has been a very long and challenging one. I am indebted to the support of so many people, without whom I may never have made it to the end! These brief acknowledgements do not do justice to the gratitude I feel for the support I have received over the years – but they're a start.

Firstly, thank you to my parents. I hope you know how deeply I appreciate what you have done for me – from the practical and financial assistance, to the constant awareness of what I was going through.

My wonderful husband, Ryan, your love and support has been so limitless, thank you for taking such good care of me. More than this, thank you for giving me what I needed most: the drive to get this finished, for us.

Brian Bishop, thank you for always reminding me of the importance of what I was doing. Your reflections always renewed my confidence in the process – and in myself. But most of all, thank you for helping me see that it was worth the wait.

Ali Marsh, thank you for your invaluable support and for all you have taught me.

My fairy godmother, Peta Dzidic, I will never forget that day you appeared in front of me on Oxford Street – reconnecting with you has been such a joy. Thank you for pointing out that what I have to say is valuable in its own right.

Thank you also to Neville Hennessey and Moira O'Conner, for your assistance with the formalities along the way.

In my clinical world, I owe much thanks to David Felton, Liz Laing and Natalie Deverneuil. I am very fortunate to have had such guidance and understanding available to me.

To Eugenie and Paul, thank you for your patience, support and encouragement – week in, week out, year in, year out. I couldn't ask for better friends/family.

Erin, thank you for always getting it and knowing just what to say.

To all my other family and friends, thank you for giving me a life outside of 'this' that has been so rich and fun.

A special mention goes to Nala Bahri. You were by my side (or on my lap!) throughout this entire journey. Your companionship meant the world to me. Thank you for saving up your nine lives to see me through to the end.

Above all, thank you to the people who shared their voices with me by taking part in this research. I will always be indebted to your willingness to speak with me. Not only did each of you make this research possible, but you inspired me to think differently and to be bold in my ideas and in my advocacy. I have endeavoured to honour your voices not only in the pages that follow, but in always striving to encourage thinking that breaks down the

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stigmatising assumptions which ensue from our propensity to see the world in terms of either/or.

Abstract

Divergence in how illicit drug use is constructed in western liberal culture continues to grow and these various, disparate constructions continue to produce inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising responses. The perspective of people who use illicit drugs is an important domain which has the potential to generate valuable insights into alternative ways of constructing such conduct and those who take part in it. The key objective of this research was thus to explore this conceptual mess and its shortcomings from this perspective. Situated in a social constructionist epistemology and drawing on poststructuralist thinking and methodology, a mixed-methods approach was adopted. A contextual analysis examined a selection of local and national news-media texts (newspaper articles and online discussion forums) to provide examples of the ways in which such conduct and subjects are predominantly constructed in Australian culture and of the effects of these constructions. Intensive interviews were conducted with twenty-one people who use illicit drugs. An in-depth deconstructive analytic framework (Causal Layered Analysis) was adapted to explore what the participants had to say about automatic, structured, discursive, and more emotive, less conscious ways of knowing about illicit drug use. The findings extend on existing concerns about the paradoxical and limiting effects of dichotomous logic on constructions of illicit drug use. Proposing how such logic may produce a state of 'stuckness' in which the same shortcomings are produced over and over again, the findings also raise questions about the role of unconscious, affective processes in maintaining these limitations. Overall what emerged were broader critical reflections regarding the challenges we may face as a culture in adopting alternative ways of thinking, and the deep cultural shifts that might be necessary to develop more effective understandings and generate meaningful change in how we respond to illicit drug use.

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List of Acronyms

AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
AOD	Alcohol and Other Drugs
AVIL	Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users' League
BDO	Big Day Out
CLA	Causal Layered Analysis
IGRP	Iterative-Generative-Reflexive Practice
SIARG	Social Inclusion Action Research Group
UKDPC	United Kingdom Drug Policy Commission
WHO	World Health Organisation

Chapter One

1. Introduction

In this introductory chapter I establish the background to and rationale for this research by outlining the key concerns which underpin it. In providing an overview of both the current and historical context in which the key concerns are situated, I aim to orient the reader to the theoretical, methodological, cultural, political, and personal underpinnings which have shaped the research process and outcomes. The specific political objectives and research questions are then detailed. And finally, I provide a brief overview of the methodological process that was adopted to explore the complex problem of how the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are understood and approached in western liberal culture.

1.1 Foreground: The mess we find ourselves in

In 2013 around two in five people (42%) aged fourteen years and over in Australia had used an illicit drug at some point in their lifetime (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW], 2014). In that same year, around one in seven people (15%) had used an illicit drug in the last twelve months and approximately five per cent had done so in the past week (AIHW, 2014). A significant number of Australians have thus been, or continue to be, affected by the use of illicit drugs. Statements such as this are often associated with significant concern about the problematic ways in which people can be affected by illicit drug use, such as becoming dependent, overdosing, contracting blood-borne viruses, or being involved in other criminal activity. Research indicates however that illicit drug use does not exclusively nor necessarily effect people in such ways, and that a significant proportion of people who use illicit drugs do not encounter marked forms of harm (Hammersely & Reid, 2002; Gossop, 2013; Ryder, Salmon, & Walker, 2006; MacCoun, 2003; Rickwood et al., 2005; Reinerman, 2005, 2013). Thus despite the inclination in western liberal culture to focus on the potential for illicit drugs to cause significant harm, people are affected by the use of illicit drugs in broad and diverse ways.

The term 'illicit drug use' refers to a range of behaviours which vary according to a multitude of intersecting cultural, political, social, psychological, physiological, and material factors. It makes sense therefore that the effects or outcomes of taking part in such conduct are likewise diverse. Consistent with this, although the significantly harmful outcomes of such conduct described above tend to be the most prominent and publicised aspects of illicit drug use, research indicates that only a small minority (10-20%) of people who use illicit drugs develop highly risky patterns of drug use (Ryder et al., 2006) and that

many people who use illicit drugs implement practices which can effectively minimise such risks (Duff, 2005; Green & Moore, 2009; Mugford, 1994; Olsen, 2009; Parker, Alderidge, & Measham, 1998; Parker, Williams, and Alderidge, 2002; Pennay, 2012; Pennay & Moore, 2010; Reinerman, Murphy, & Waldorf, 1994; Riley, Morey, & Griffen, 2010; Rødner, 2005; Rødner-Sznitman, 2008). Similarly, the functions or benefits that people derive from using illicit drugs have been shown to be highly variable, ranging from affect regulation (Newcomb, Vargas-Carmona, & Galaif, 1999; Plumridge & Chetwynd, 1999; Valentine & Fraser, 2008) and the prevention of withdrawal (APA, 2000) to the enhancement of social or bodily experiences (Duff, 2008; Green & Moore; Hunt & Evans, 2008; MacLean, 2008; Riley, Morey, & Griffin, 2008), taking time out from day-to-day responsibilities (Moore, 1992; Mugford, 1994; Parker et al., 1998) and bonding with others (Foster & Spencer, 2013). What it means to say that a significant number of Australians have been or continue to be affected by the use of illicit drugs thus varies according to a multitude of factors. Broadly, my aim in conducting this research was to explore how such variations in the conduct of illicit drug use and in the people who engage in it are accounted for and responded to in western liberal culture, and examine the potential implications of these accounts and responses for individuals who use illicit drugs and for western liberal culture more generally.

The focus of the research was thus the examination of western liberal constructions of such conduct and subjects. The reason for this focus is not only because this constitutes the context in which the research is situated, but more pertinently, because the emergence of the very notions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are understood to be intimately connected to the emergence of this particular culture (Fraser & Moore, 2011; O'Malley, 2009; Seddon, 2007; Sedgewick, 1994). With the growing influence of the rationalities of liberalism (i.e., of individual freedom, the free market, and reduced state sovereignty) post-enlightenment, modern western culture came increasingly to be synonymous with the autonomous, rational, disciplined subject (Burchell, 1996). It was with the emergence of this version of individual freedom and the autonomous subject therefore that concerns about the impacts of drugs on individuals became intelligible (O'Malley, 2009; Reith, 2004; Seddon, 2007), or as some argue, became necessary (Fraser & Moore, 2011; Manderson, 2011; Sedgewick, 1994). Different ways of understanding and responding to such conduct and subjects have thus emerged in unison with developments in the implementation of liberal rationalities in western societies. Indeed, just as neoliberal revisions of the relationship between the free market and state sovereignty has seen the

occurrence of revisions in what constitutes the ideal subject in western societies (Rose, 1996a), so too have these contemporary shifts in western culture seen the emergence of revised versions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects. When exploring how these acts and subjects are understood and approached in a western setting such as Australia, therefore, it is liberal and neoliberal constructions which are necessarily being explored.

1.1.1 A history of divergent and disjunctive constructions

Although modern and contemporary western liberal culture have produced an expanse of varying models, theories, discourses, and policies which proclaim differing understandings of illicit drugs, illicit drug use and illicit drug users, these understandings fail to form an overall appreciation of the diversity and complexity of such phenomena but rather tend to form discrete, disjunctive and opposing knowledges. Indeed, as Cameron Duff (2012) emphasises, disjunction and divergence are perhaps the defining features of research into alcohol and drug use:

After a century and a half of established social science research (and millennia of careful observation before that), the vast majority of the objects of social inquiry have by now been rendered in innumerable divergent and competing iterations. Drug use is a perfect example of this profusion. Given the extent of scientific analysis of AOD use, it is no longer possible (if it ever were) to identify a discrete consensus regarding the characteristic features of either drugs or the individuals and groups who consume them. One must now speak of multiple, overlapping, disjunctive scientific accounts of AOD use, each with its own distinctive features and attendant methods of disclosure and discussion... such is the mess that AOD [alcohol and other drug] researchers find themselves in (pp. 270-271).

It seems, therefore, that the problem with the current ways in which the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are understood and approached is not so much the existence of differing accounts of drugs, drug use and the people engaged in such conduct, but rather the extent to which these differing understandings are often produced in isolation from and in opposition to each other.

Consistently, it has been noted that constructing such conduct and subjects in divergent and competing terms not only precludes opportunities to acknowledge their diversity and complexity but also results in the development of theory which “muddles social discourse, moral dilemmas, psychological states and pharmacology in an awkward manner” (Hammersley & Reid, 2002, p .8), produces “fuzzy” definitions (Jourdan, 2009, p.

515), and creates a “chronicle of conceptual acrobatics” (Reinarman, 2005, p. 311). Indeed, all of these shortcomings have been shown to be characteristic of research, theory, and policy in relation to illicit drug use and addiction—to the point that it seems apposite to state that this field can be understood as yet to “overcome the strange pandemic disability” it finds itself in (Weinberg, 2013, p. 173). Such divergences also produce competing treatment philosophies and practices, and thus have been shown to act as a disincentive for consumers to engage with treatment services due to the confusing and contradictory messages and expectations they encounter in such contexts (Treloar & Holt, 2006; see also Karasaki et al., 2013; Lancaster, Santana, Madden & Ritter, 2015; Lancaster, Seear & Treloar, 2015; Radcliffe & Stevens, 2008; Truan, 1993; Wolfe, 2007). Moreover, the disjunctive and competing ways in which illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are produced may also play a key role in the stigmatisation, marginalisation, and disenfranchisement of people who use illicit drugs. Thus, as will be further developed throughout this chapter, there exists a strong rationale for exploring this ‘mess’ that characterises western liberal constructions illicit drug use and drug-using subjects.

Importantly, in problematising these divergent and disjunctive understandings of and approaches to illicit drug use and drug-using subjects, my objective in conducting this research was not to add to this expanse of accounts. Rather, I set out to examine the relevance of existing constructions, question the utility of forming them in divergent and disjunctive terms, and explore potential alternatives to this ‘mess’. As I expand upon shortly, these objectives were also underpinned by particular political concerns. First however, I present a brief outline this history of divergent and disjunctive constructions and the challenges that this mess presents.

1.1.1.1 Moral versus medical accounts

Historically, the use of the substances now known of as ‘illicit’ was considered a normative and sanctioned activity (Berridge & Edwards, 1981). It was only as various social, political, economic and cultural forces coalesced during the 19th and 20th centuries that western culture came to see the use of substances such as opium, cocaine, cannabis, amphetamines, and so forth, as ‘problematic’ (Cooper, 2004; Manderson, 1993; Reith, 2004). With the creation of this problem, “where none had previously been thought to exist” (Berridge & Edwards, 1981, p. 75), emerged the need to provide explanation for its aetiology and nature as well as the need to develop formal ways of responding to it (i.e., in the form of laws, policies, and treatments). The divergence and disjuncture that characterises how the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are understood and approached,

therefore, have arisen out of this endeavour to produce, explain and respond to the 'problem' of illicit drug use and the 'abnormalities' of those engaged in it. Critically, then, although a vast array of differing constructions have emerged throughout western liberal history, the fact that these various understandings have been undergirded by the endeavour to pin down the 'problem' of illicit drug use has meant that little diversification in how such conduct and subjects are responded to has emerged. Rather, as outlined below, these differing accounts have had, and continue to have, the convergent effect of constructing illicit drug use and the people who take part in it in terms of abnormality or 'otherness'.

In its early incarnations illicit drug use was problematised exclusively as a moral issue. Class, race, and religious discourses coalesced to produce particular substances as having the capacity to corrupt, seduce, and possess individuals, destroying their moral capacities (Manderson, 1993, 2005; May, 2001; Moore, 2008; Valverde, 1997). Exposure to these 'vices' was constructed as undermining the individual's capacity to exercise self-restraint and moderation; no longer ruled by reason, discipline, and free will they came to be governed by the "carnal pleasures" of the "vulgar, volatile body" (Moore, 2008, p. 356). In related accounts, individuals were constructed as innately 'evil' or 'weak' and therefore lacking the moral constitution to conduct themselves in a civilised and disciplined manner and thus as being prone to 'depraved' behaviour, such as excessive intoxication (Manderson, 2005). Illicit drug use was thus synonymous with sinfulness, and those affected by it were deemed to require external control and regulation (Manderson, 1993; Reith, 2004). Hence such conduct became not just unconscionable but also unsanctioned; a move which formalised the delineation of drug-using subjects as 'bad' or 'deviant'.

As the joint forces of empiricism and the medical profession gained influence, and the discourses of religion and the church came to be contrasted with those of science and medicine, accounts of physiological and psychological pathology were presented as alternatives to explicitly and exclusively moralistic accounts of illicit drug use. Notions of physical disease and/or psychological disorder were seen as more favourable and legitimate than those of possession and sinfulness as these were seen to be scientifically-based (Reinarman, 2005) and as promoting treatment over punishment (Valverde, 1997). Contemporarily, there continues to be an emphasis on differentiating medical from moral accounts according to these criteria.

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Medical accounts of illicit drug use are frequently advocated for as promoting an ethic of health care rather than an ethic of regulation in relation to the issue of illicit drug use; contrasts are routinely drawn between the ways in which medical accounts focus on improving the well-being of people who use illicit drugs (i.e., through the provision of medical and other allied health interventions) and the emphasis on punitive (i.e., legal) approaches that moral accounts generate. Harm reduction theory, policy and practice, for example, advocates for medical accounts in order to construct and approach illicit drug use as a public health issue rather than a criminal matter (Erickson & Hathaway, 2010; Hathaway, 2002; 2010; Tammi & Hurme, 2006). Proponents of medical accounts also propose that seeing individuals who use illicit drugs as unwell (be it psychologically and/or physically) removes the implication of personal responsibility and the associated imputations of blame which moralistic accounts propagate. As Davies states (1997):

Calling something a 'disease' carries an important social message, not just a medical one. It implies that the phenomenon itself is not brought about directly by the individuals who display it; though they may of course put themselves more or less at risk by their 'voluntary' actions (p. 12).

By producing such conduct in terms of psychophysiological processes rather than those connected to individual agency, medical accounts of illicit drug use are thus often constructed as counteracting moralistic claims that drug-using subjects are less 'deserving' of medical treatment (Reinarman, 2005).

In practice however these differentiations are not quite so robust. Indeed, the operation and effects of the project of medicalisation have been shown to overlap with moral accounts. Although pitted as opposing and redressing the emphasis on moral explanations for and responses to illicit drug use, medical accounts have not prompted moralistic accounts to recede in their currency and influence. This is perhaps made most evident in the lack of "meaningful reform" that has occurred in relation to illicit drug use policy in western liberal culture, with such policies continuing to prioritise drug law enforcement (Hathaway, 2002, p. 399). Consistent with this, Tupper (2012) describes how the proliferation of medical metaphors (e.g., drugs as pathogens) in constructing the 'problem' of illicit drug use has failed to impact on the operation and effects of moral metaphors (e.g., drugs as malevolent agents):

While the pathogens metaphor would seem to open up an avenue for compassion that the malevolent agents metaphor precludes (i.e., by casting the "addict" or

“abuser” as a victim of disease), its currency has not resulted in a significant departure from the overall punitive nature of drug control efforts or a rupture in the coherence of the drug war paradigm over the past century (p. 482).

Although medical accounts of illicit drug use have thrived, therefore, there has been little or no diminishment in the extent to which moral accounts shape how such conduct and the people engaged in it are understood and responded to. This is also made evident in research which highlights the extent to which people who use illicit drugs continue to be approached *in medical contexts* as less ‘deserving’ of medical treatment, such as pharmacological treatment for pain (Bell & Salmon, 2009) or hepatitis C treatment (Fraser, 2011; Rance et al., 2012). Importantly, what these latter findings highlight is that the continuation of moralising approaches to illicit drug use and drug-using subjects has not occurred *despite of* the project of medicalisation, but rather that such accounts have *directly contributed* to the ongoing construction of such conduct as ‘bad’ and ‘wrong’.

Medical accounts of illicit drug use have always struggled to fully separate out moralistic tones. Valverde (1997) describes, for example, how early theories of inebriety and addiction, relied upon “moral criteria” to “single out the disease” (p. 260). She goes on to describe elsewhere that “physicians have not succeeded in defining the boundary between the normal and the pathological in *medical terms*”, instead they have primarily demarcated it in social, and ultimately, moral terms (Valverde, 1998, pp. 26-27, emphasis original). Thus, although constructed as deeply different and separate from moralising understandings, medical formations of illicit drug use can rather be seen as having retained moral components. In his thoughtful analysis of the history of debate about illicit drug use and freedom, Seddon (2007) explains that the project of medicalisation did not involve replacing moral accounts but rather hybridising them. He states that the growth of medical accounts:

did not involve or represent a neat succession from one epoch to another. The disease model...was a hybrid concept in which both old and new notions of freedom to some extent co-existed in a complex assemblage. In other words, there was not a wholesale paradigm shift during this period but rather a refiguring of the ‘multi-layered mosaic’ (Garland 1985: 155) of the social realm (p. 337).

The medical approach to illicit drug use was thus not a radical departure from antiquated notions of sinfulness and moral weakness, but an evolution of these concepts; refigured in the terms of science and medicine—discourses which had come to hold the legitimacy and

authority that had once been held by the church and the state (Manderson, 1993; Reinerman 2005). Indeed, Manderson (1993) proposes that in terms of their effects—particularly the affective and regulatory responses they bring about—moral and medical accounts are transposable:

New reasons were found to justify [drug laws], reasons not based on race but on medicine. While the vice of illegal drug use, and especially of trafficking, continued to be important in influencing how people felt about illegal drugs, this emotional reaction was justified by a growing emphasis on the medical dangers of drug use. The image of Mr Sin was fading and in its place came Dr No; a complex new mythology which justified the suppression of 'drug' use not just because it was sinful but because it was 'non-medical', not only because it was wrong, but because it was dangerous. Medical paternalism legitimized public hatred (p. 101).

Constructions of illicit drug use in terms of medicine thus depart from those formed in moral terms concerning the origins of the malaise—with medical accounts offering aetiologies and explanations that are in keeping with the knowledge structures that modern and contemporary liberal culture have privileged and reified (i.e., science and medicine)—but arguably have not brought into effect vastly differing premises from which to understand and respond to such conduct and subjects. Be it because of notions of weak will or those of physical/psychological pathology such conduct and subjects continue to be seen as 'bad', 'wrong', and ultimately 'other' to the omnipotent cultural norms of self-control, freedom, and autonomy. As Stein (1985) explains, therefore, despite some divergences between moral and medical accounts, the discourses of science and medicine have not resulted in the capacity to conceive of illicit drug use in "affect-neutral" terms, but rather have produced additional "affect laden" categories through which we can see people who use illicit drugs in terms of "'not me'" (i.e., as other to that which is normal and desirable in western liberal culture) (p. 224).

Assembling illicit drug use in terms of a "colourful mixture of the physical, psychological, social and spiritual" (Keane, 2002, p. 39), medical accounts have thus not brought about greater clarity and focus concerning the aetiology, nature, and treatment of the 'problem' of illicit drug use (May, 2001; Reinerman, 2005; Weinberg, 2013). The project of medicalisation has instead brought about additional understandings which co-exist with, and often complement, longstanding moral frameworks. This project has thus played a key role in generating the "ambivalence, ambiguities, and dispute" which characterise

knowledge of and responses to such conduct and subjects (O'Malley, 2009, p. 3). Indeed, the outcomes of this project are perhaps best captured in Seddon's (2010) description of what has come out of attempts in the United Kingdom to address the stigmatising and pathologising constructions of addiction by constructing drug-using subjects as 'problem drug users':

The idea of the PDU [problem drug user] has not been a successor to the addiction concept; it is a new cohabitee in the field. So, in an important sense, the immense and longrunning difficulties in pinning down the 'real' nature of the phenomenon we are all concerned with have been *multiplied* rather than evaded or side-stepped. The picture has become dizzyingly complex: there is now a suite of related and overlapping but still distinct concepts which are deployed in different ways in different contexts (p. 340, emphasis original).

What seems to have occurred throughout modern liberal history's efforts to produce and respond to the acts and subjects of illicit drug use, therefore, has been a burgeoning of divergence with little corresponding progression or advancement in what is known and done. Importantly, as is outlined next, this issue is one that likewise arises when looking at the constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects that have emerged with contemporary shifts in western liberal culture.

1.1.2.2 Neoliberal developments: More pronounced divergence

Over the last 30 years, growing concerns about the economic and social impacts of traditional liberal modes of governance has resulted in numerous revisions in the practices through which individuals in western liberal contexts are governed (Burchell, 1993). Coinciding with these shifts has been the emergence of a more contemporary, neoliberal subject who is not only expected to conduct themselves rationally, autonomously and responsibly, but to adopt a more deliberate, calculative and enterprising stance to governing themselves (Rose, 1996a). Indeed, neoliberal rationalities produce the ideal subject as one who consciously, calculatedly engages in 'appropriate' conduct in order to maximise their quality of life (Petersen, 1996; Rose & Miller, 1992). Such rationalities thus see government as occurring *through* the freedom of rational, enterprising individuals who actively, freely choose to govern themselves through practices of choice and consumption (Rose, 1996a; Rose & Miller, 1992). As Burchell (1993) points out, therefore, the emergence of neoliberalism has produced "a new form of 'responsibilization'" in which responsibility for one's conduct, lifestyle, and citizenship has been increasingly devolved from the state

onto individuals who are encouraged to exercise their freedom by making rational, responsible and enterprising life choices (p. 276; see also Petersen, 2003; Zibbell, 2004). The emergence of these contemporary changes in western liberal culture has thus seen the emergence of new kinds of drug-using practices and subjects; specifically, those which are responsibilised and normalised. Importantly, then, with these contemporary developments has come more pronounced tensions in how illicit drug use and the people engaged in such conduct are constructed.

As the discourses of neoliberal subjectivity have gained increasing ascendancy, responsibilising and normalising constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects have come to feature in AOD research, policy and practice. In particular, there has been an abundance of research in which illicit drug use is constructed as a deliberate, calculated, and highly regulated activity, and which constructs individuals taking part in certain forms of illicit drug use as autonomous, rational, and active subjects (Duff, 2005; Erickson & Hathaway, 2010; Fraser, 2004; Gowan, Whetstone, & Andic, 2012; Green & Moore, 2009; Irwin & Fry, 2007; Jauffret-Roustide, 2009; Measham & Shiner, 2009; Moore & Fraser, 2006; O'Malley & Mugford, 1991; Parker et al., 1998; Pennay, 2012; Pennay & Moore, 2010; Polcin, 2014; Rødner-Sznitzman, 2008; Tammi & Hurme, 2007). Thus, in contrast to traditional constructions of irrationality and compulsion, such research has produced versions of the drug-using subject that align them with, rather than separate them from, the norms and values of contemporary liberal culture.

In constructing illicit drug use as taking place in controlled and disciplined ways, and as a practice designed to cultivate desired outcomes whilst minimising undesirable effects, these contemporary developments have enabled certain drug-using subjects to be positioned as rational, self-governing, and enterprising subjects – and hence as “mainstream” citizens:

One key notion was that ‘party drug’ use was only acceptable on weekends or during holidays. The theme of personal control is central to experiences of drug use (whether of the ‘regular’ or ‘occasional’ kind) and network members were aware of the potentially detrimental effects of ‘unchecked’ drug use to their health, interpersonal relationships, employment/careers and financial goals. They were also acutely aware that uncontrolled drug use had the potential to damage their status within ‘mainstream’ society. For these reasons, the maintenance of

‘controlled’ or ‘functional’ drug use was much valued by network members (Green & Moore, 2009, p. 404).

Such constructions thus constitute distinctly neoliberal accounts of illicit drug use and of those taking part in it, and clearly have the effect of aligning certain drug-using practices and subjects with the contemporary version of the ‘good citizen’ who shapes their conduct according to the ethics of “self-examination, self-care, and self-improvement” (Petersen, 1996, p. 49). Further, the growing influence of the discourses of choice and consumption has seen illicit drug use be constructed as a practice that is commensurate with the distinctly neoliberal ethic of discerning and reflexive consumption (Fitzgerald, Broad, & Dare, 1999; Race, 2005; Riley et al., 2010). Likewise, the contemporary ethics of self-knowledge and self-surveillance are often drawn upon to construct drug-using subjects as capable of governing themselves in ways that ensure the maintenance of their “cultural credibility” (Measham, 2004, p. 319) (e.g., by avoiding uncontrolled or excessive intoxication – see Duff, 2004; Green & Moore, 2009; Holt, 2005; Olsen, 2009; Pennay & Moore, 2010; Riley et al., 2008). The unfolding of these contemporary constructions of drug-using subjects, whose practices are shaped by the principles of active risk-management, cost-benefit analyses, and calculated hedonism (Boys, Marsden & Strang, 2001; Erickson & Cheung, 1999; Featherstone, 1991; Measham & Shiner, 2009; Parker, 2005; Parker et al., 1998; Szmigin et al., 2008), has thus made it possible for such conduct and subjects to be seen as consonant with rather than ‘other’ to the normative, successful subject of neoliberal government. Indeed, more than constructing certain drug-using practices as kept ‘in check’ in order to maintain health, productivity, relationships, and financial interests, these contemporary discourses have seen certain acts and subjects of illicit drug use come to be constructed as meeting the contemporary obligation for individuals to maintain an investment in the ‘project of self’ (Rose & Miller, 1992).

Contrary to traditional constructions of illicit drug use which establish harm as inevitable and marked, these contemporary developments have also seen drug-using subjects be configured as capable of, and responsible for, managing harms in multiple domains; producing illicit drug use “as just another risk to be managed” (Riley et al., 2010, p. 47) alongside the host of risks encountered in more broadly in their lives (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991). Indeed, it is in/through the discourses, policies and practices of harm reduction that such constructions of the neoliberal drug-using subject have burgeoned (Fraser, 2004; Moore & Fraser, 2006). By constructing individuals who use illicit drugs as capable of making sensible and informed choices in the interest of minimising harm

(Erickson & Hathaway, 2010), such discourses have made it possible for the drug-using subject to be produced as “an active rather than a passive entity, capable of making choices about his/her own life, taking responsibility for these choices, and playing an important role in prevention, treatment, and the recovery process” (Erickson, Riley, Cheung, & O’Hare, 1997, p. 8; see also Zibbell, 2004). Such contemporary re-workings of traditional assumptions are made evident in accounts of “educated”, “prudent” (Zadjow, 2010, p. 220) and “risk-calculating” illicit drug users (Pennay & Moore, 2010, p. 569), as well as the “reasonable and socially responsible injector” who is “safe, careful, and clean in injecting practices and general behaviour” (Plumridge & Chetwynd, 1998, p. 726; see also Moore, 2009; Rhodes et al., 2009). Through the discourses of harm reduction, therefore, it has become possible to contest archetypal assumptions of deviance and disorder by constructing drug-using subjects “as health-conscious citizens capable of rational decision-making, self-determination, self-regulation and risk management” (Moore & Fraser, 2006, p. 3037).

Critically, then, these contemporary developments in how the acts and subjects of illicit drug use can be constructed are understood to have introduced the potential to empower and emancipate people who use illicit drugs from disenfranchising and marginalising subject positions (Gowan et al., 2012; Jauffret-Routsid, 2009; Keane, 2003; Moore, 2009; Moore & Fraser, 2006; Tammi & Hurme, 2007). Indeed, research has shown that taking up harm reduction practices can constitute a recourse for establishing “one’s credentials as responsible and rational” (Moore, 2009, p.1166) and offer “a means of producing ethical, responsible (wise, pure) selves” for people who use illicit drugs (Fraser, 2004, p. 206). Further, as Gowan et al. (2012) assert, conceiving of people who use illicit drugs as adhering to the norms of rational, autonomous, and responsible conduct has created opportunities for such individuals to be treated as active and legitimate participants rather than being acted upon: “For those historically cast as sub-human, harm reduction lends users the legitimacy to demand fair treatment, resources, information, and access to treatment alternatives” (p. 1257; see also Zibbell, 2004). Through an emphasis on normalisation and “individual liberties”, therefore, harm reduction discourses claim to open “for drug users a new kind of opportunity as citizens” (Tammi & Hurme, 2007, p. 87).

Notably however, with these neoliberal developments have also emerged alternative recourses for the acts and subjects of illicit drug use to be conceived of as undesirable and ‘other’. As Donzelot (1991) points out, the price of the active citizenship that neoliberalism offers is the expectation that it is the individual who is responsible for

carrying out the tasks of government, and thus who is responsible for the outcomes of these tasks (see also Burchell, 1993). Indeed, in this contemporary context “those who seek to operate outside predetermined lines of action risk being labelled irresponsible or as troublemakers and suffering financial penalty of some kind or being denied access to services or advice” (Petersen, 2003, p. 195). It is for this reason that numerous researchers raise questions about the benefits of neoliberal constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects; expressing concerns about the way that they produce insufficiently contextualised understandings of risk and harm and thus establish new grounds for stigmatising, marginalising, and disenfranchising certain individuals (Bourgois, 2000; Fischer, Turnbull, Poland, & Haydon, 2004; Miller, 2001; Moore, 2009; Moore & Fraser, 2004; Rhodes, 2002; Zibbell, 2004). Contemporary developments in liberal culture thus appear to have resulted in the coexistence of constructions of controlled or disciplined drug use and the autonomous, rational, responsible, and active drug-using subject alongside traditional constructions of addiction and the compulsive, irrational drug-using subject. More than this however, such developments and the production of the responsabilised drug-using subject also appear to have resulted in the emergence of new possibilities for certain people who use illicit drugs to be constructed as ‘other’ (i.e., as failing the tasks of appropriate risk taking, healthy living, and self-improvement, etc.).

Contemporarily, then, divergence in how the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are accounted for and responded to has become increasingly pronounced. Indeed, as Lancaster, Seear and Treloar (2015) note, drug-using subjects are now:

constituted simultaneously as chaotic and self-controlled, as both irresponsible and capable of responsible choices, as both diseased bodies to be controlled and neoliberal agents in pursuit of their own successful health outcomes (...) Through the subject positions made available...people who inject drugs may simultaneously see themselves as rational citizens making safe, harm-reducing, responsible choices in accessing sterile injecting equipment, and irrational devalued, non-citizens, whose conduct is constituted as always already unsafe, dangerous, risky and irrational (p. 6).

It seems apparent, therefore, that now more than ever we are confronted with a ‘mess’ of highly disjunctive and opposing possibilities when understanding and responding to the acts and subjects of illicit drug use. What’s more, although the discourses of neoliberal subjectivity may offer some benefits in terms of empowerment and normalisation, it seems

that important questions about the adequacy of these contemporary constructions, and their potentially stigmatising and marginalising effects, are yet to be fully explored. Consequently, it seems that despite this ever-expanding repertoire of constructions of illicit drug use, a lack of significant progress or advancement in what is known and done may persist. In conducting this research, I thus hoped to examine these more pronounced divergences and disjunctions in accounts of illicit drug use that have emerged with these neoliberal developments, and to question the extent to which these divergences in existing understandings and approaches constitute meaningful and useful distinctions to make.

1.2 Research overview

The overall focus of this research was to explore and examine the mess outlined above; to generate questions about the merits (or lack thereof) of the proliferation of divergent and competing accounts of illicit drug use and about the salience, appropriateness, and outcomes of frameworks that produce opposing versions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects. I aimed to do so by exploring what people who use illicit drugs make of this mess; questioning if some accounts or knowledges stood out as more or less salient and fitting to them as they accounted for their own drug-using practices and subjectivities. This led to the formation of in-depth critique about the motivations for and effects of relying upon divergent and competing knowledges, and to the development of hypotheses about what might be gained from thinking about and constructing illicit drug use in more expansive and diversified terms. In addition, I conducted an initial inquiry into the extent to which such divergent and competing characteristics are apparent in accounts of illicit drug use in Australian culture by exploring how the act and subject of illicit drug use is produced in media texts. The findings from this preliminary inquiry were more instructive than originally anticipated; operating not only to contextualise the interview data but also to deepen the critique of the effects of producing illicit drug use in divergent and competing terms. The overall research aims and objectives will be presented in detail shortly. Firstly however, I discuss the political underpinnings that shaped the research.

1.3 Political underpinnings

My objectives in conducting this research were underpinned by a concern with the degree to which people who use illicit drugs are stigmatised, marginalised, and disenfranchised. As discussed below, the fact that illicit drug use attracts the most pronounced and entrenched forms of stigma in western liberal culture, stemming from and resulting in the routine construction of people who use illicit drugs as lesser or non-citizens, highlights that there are significant problems with the ways in which we account for and

respond to such conduct and subjects are accounted as a culture. This suggests that efforts to address such stigmatising and marginalising effects need to be informed by critical examination of the processes through which illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are constructed. In this section I outline these undergirding political concerns in order to illustrate how they have shaped the research objectives and approach.

1.3.1 Stigma: A pronounced and pervasive issue

My interest in exploring the divergent and disjunctive ways in which illicit drug use is accounted for and responded to in western liberal culture stems from a concern with the extent to which people who use illicit drugs are stigmatised and marginalised. This is an interest that developed during completion of an addiction minor as part of my undergraduate psychology degree, in which I was presented with the research and theory to corroborate my personal views about the inadequacies and inequities in how illicit drug use is understood and approached in Australia and other western countries alike. I pursued this interest in my honours research, conducting a qualitative inquiry into how people who identified themselves as 'recreational drug users' delineated their drug-using practices as being definable as such. Through my work as a clinical psychologist registrar at a metropolitan government drug and alcohol service over the last five years, this interest has become a core ethos of my professional life due to the extensive stigmatisation and marginalisation that the people I work with encounter and the harms such experiences create.

Consistently, compellingly, and routinely throughout western liberal history illicit drug use has been constructed in terms of differentness and negative stereotypes, and drug-using subjects have been labelled and set apart as 'other' in distinct ways, bringing about marked exclusion and discrimination (AVIL, 2011; Ahern, Stuber & Galea, 2007; Bell & Salmon, 2009; Conner & Rosen, 2008; Elliott & Chapman, 2000; Gray, 2010; Fotopoulou, Munro, & Taylor, 2015; Hammersley & Reid, 2002; Lancaster, Santana, Madden, & Ritter, 2015; Lindesmith, 1940; Lloyd, 2013; MacGregor, 2000; Manderson, 2005; Peretti-Watel, 2003; Reinerman, 2005; Stylianou, 2004; Szasz, 1974/2003; Treloar et al., 2005; UKDPC, 2012; Van Boekel, Brouwers, Van Weeghel, & Garretsen, 2013; Zadjow, 2008). Research conducted by the World Health Organisation indicates that in comparison with other health and social conditions (e.g., criminality, homelessness, and HIV) dependence on an illicit drug ranks as the most stigmatised (Room, Rehm, Trotter, Paglia, & Üstün, 2001). Even when people experience multiple concurrent stigmas (e.g., poverty, old age, mental illness, illicit drug use) dependence on illicit drugs has been shown to constitute the "most

pervasive and persistent stigma” (Conner & Rosen, p. 258). Additionally, research from Australia indicates that it is often seen as acceptable, even helpful, to stigmatise and discriminate against people who use illicit drugs (AVIL, 2011; Treloar & Holt, 2006)—an argument that is even made by some in academic circles (Bayer, 2008; Bayer & Fairchild, 2015). What stands out about illicit drug use therefore is not just that it is stigmatised, but that it is stigmatised in *pronounced, pervasive and persistent* ways.

What does it mean if someone is stigmatised for using illicit drugs? Research has identified the impact that stigma has on a wide range of outcomes (Livingston, Milne, Lan Fang, & Amari, 2011). For example, it has been shown to impact negatively on access to treatment and healthcare (Hopwood, 2007; Gray, 2010; Radcliffe & Stevens, 2008; Simmonds & Coomber, 2009; Tindal, Cook, & Foster, 2010; Treloar et al., 2004; Wolfe, 2007), retention in treatment (Brenner, W. Von Hippel, C. Von Hippel, Resnick, & Treloar, 2010), safe injecting practices (Simmonds & Coomber; Rhodes et al., 2009), economic and social participation (AVIL, 2011; Buchanan & Young, 2000; Fitzgerald et al., 2004; Wolfe), physical and mental health (Ahern, Stuber, & Galea, 2007; AVIL; Hopwood; Tindal et al.), and overall well-being (Link, Struening, Rahav, Phelan, & Nuttbrock, 1997). Most markedly, the following extract taken from a policy position paper addressing the stigmatisation of illicit drug use in the media in the UK illustrates how stigma has the insidious overarching effect of diminishing one’s perceived value or worth as a citizen, or even as a human:

Branded for life: Stigma is one of the trinity of biases, the others being prejudice and discrimination. It is not just about disapproval, nor is it a reaction to what someone does, how they live or behave. Stigma comes from an assumption about an individual or group so they are treated not as an individual but as ‘someone like that’.

Most people we come in contact with—family, friends, neighbours, colleagues, even casual acquaintances—are dealt with as individuals. Each one is different, with the qualities and faults accepted as part of their personal characteristics.

When stigma intervenes, the person is no longer seen as a multi-faceted personality but simply as a stereotype. That person is dehumanised—obscured by an image which becomes fixed and immovable. He or she is perceived not only as behaving differently from us but actually not being like us. They are seen as lacking the human qualities shared by the people we know, live alongside, and work with (UK Drug Policy Commission, 2012, p. 11).

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Such dehumanising effects consistently emerge in literature exploring how people who use illicit drugs encounter stigma. Indeed, numerous commentators discuss how the images, stereotypes, assumptions, and models which predominantly construct illicit drug use and drug-using subjects in western liberal culture work to strip such individuals of “inherent human worth” (Fraser & Moore, 2008, p. 746; see also Fitzgerald, McDonald, & Lugman, 2004; Fraser & Valentine, 2009; Harris & Fiske, 2009; Keane, 2003; Rance, Newland, Hopwood, & Treloar, 2012; Rance & Treloar, 2015; Tupper, 2012; Wolfe, 2007).

Critically, as shown in the previous extract, the stigmatisation of illicit drug use is not isolated to public arenas such as the media, but takes place in a multitude of day-to-day interactions, including with health care professionals, colleagues, family members, and other drug-using peers (AVIL, 2011; Fotopoulou et al., 2015; Simmond & Coomber, 2009; SIARG, 2014; Tindal et al., 2010; Van Boekel, 2013). Additionally, stigma is not just enacted through interpersonal interchanges but is also brought into effect via structural factors (Paterson, Hirsch, & Andres, 2013; Smith, 2010). Indeed, numerous researchers have emphasised how structural factors such as the distribution of economic, material, and social resources can bring about stigma and exclusion by limiting access to resources and environments that are necessary for one to take up responsibilised positions (such as through the use of clean injecting equipment) (Bourgois, 1998; Madden & Cavalieri, 2007; Rhodes et al., 2005; Rhodes et al., 2007). Others have explored the role that spatial and material factors in treatment contexts (e.g., the layout of clinics and pharmacies, the location and operating hours of treatment services) play in setting people who use illicit drugs apart as other and in demarcating them as less deserving of the same privileges (e.g., privacy, access to resources) as other citizens (Fischer, et al., 2004; Fraser & valentine, 2009; Paterson, Hirsch, & Andres, 2013; Rance et al., 2012; Smith, 2010). Illustrating how these processes are deeply embedded in the structures of western liberal culture, such research thus highlights that the stigma and marginalisation people who use illicit drugs encounter is not just pronounced but is pervasive.

Stigma and its multiple adverse effects thus constitutes one of the most prominent, pressing and profound ways in which people are affected by the use of illicit drugs. Consequently, understanding how best to address the pronounced stigmatisation and marginalisation that accompanies illicit drug use should be a priority for drug and alcohol researchers. Because it is so “systemic and entrenched”, occurring “at all levels of society” (AVIL, 2011, p. 1), it is an issue which “cannot be simply overcome by attitudinal change” but rather requires comprehensive discursive, structural, social, and cultural change (Rance

et al., 2012, p. 249). Thus a central premise underpinning the research objectives and approach was that examining the role that divergent and disjunctive accounts of illicit drug use play in the production and operation of stigma and marginalisation may generate useful hypotheses about how such comprehensive changes may be pursued and facilitated. This premise rests upon the argument that there is a connection between the issue of divergence and disjunction in how illicit drug use is accounted for and the stigmatisation of such conduct; an argument which is outlined below.

1.3.2 Explaining stigma: Poorly accounting for the realities of illicit drug use

A number of writers have suggested that the ways in which illicit drug-using practices are accounted for in western liberal medicine, psychology, epidemiology, sociology, etc., fit poorly with the realities of such practices. Moore and Fraser (2006) for example, state that even contemporary accounts of illicit drug-using practices and subjectivities “assume and reproduce understandings of behaviour, thought and sociality that fit only poorly the realities faced by many drug users” (p. 3035). Likewise, Duff (2015) points out that “little progress has been made” in how we understand and act upon the problem of illicit drug use because “when it comes time to account for what might be done about problems like AOD use, it is almost always the individual agent that receives the greatest attention” (p. 5). Thus, as has been highlighted for some time now (see O’Malley & Mugford, 1991 for example), there continues to exist a significant disunion between the ways in which illicit drug use is accounted for in western liberal culture and what constitute the complex or messy actualities of such conduct and the people taking part in it. Importantly then, in failing to align with the realities of drug-using practices and those involved in it, the ways in which illicit drug use is predominantly accounted for and responded to in western liberal culture arguably constitute fertile ground for the production of pronounced stigma and marginalisation.

Largely, the stigmatisation of illicit drug use has been attributed to the long-standing dominance of pathology-based accounts of illicit drug use. This insistence upon the construction of all drug use and drug users as abnormal (i.e., as bad and/or sick) has been extensively critiqued for promulgating over-generalised accounts that poorly match the diverse ways in which drug use takes place, its diverse effects, and the diversity of people who use illicit drugs (Buchanan & Young, 2000; Hammersley & Reid, 2002; Keane, 2002; Moore, 1992; O’Malley & Mugford, 1991; Room, 2003). The addiction-as-disease model has long been critiqued for obscuring forms of illicit drug use that cannot be

explained in terms of dependence, tolerance, and withdrawal (see for example Mugford, 1994; Reinarman et al., 1994; Robins et al., 1974). Efforts to rigorously categorise “the complexities of drug-using behaviours” under this “heading of addiction-as-disease” have thus been countenanced as contributing significantly to the promulgation of the widespread stigmatisation of such conduct and those taking part in it (Reinarman, 2005, p. 313). When nuances and complexities are “glossed over in [the] simplistic reductionism” (Tupper, 2012, p. 479) of moral or medical accounts, any and all forms of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects become problematised and othered in these terms.

Contemporary developments, in the form of responsabilising and normalising accounts, have thus been approached as an opportunity to redress such imbalance by providing more appropriate ways of understanding illicit drug use; providing understandings which acknowledge greater variability in the way illicit drugs are used, and which attend to particular realities of such conduct that have traditionally been obscured (such as responsible choice-making, risk management, autonomy, and social/recreational functions). As stated, however, critical scholars have expressed concern that these contemporary frameworks still fail to generate the nuanced and contextualised accounts that are needed if our understandings of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are going to line up with the messy, diverse, and complex realities of such conduct and subjectivities (Moore & Fraser, 2006) and that they continue to obscure important dimensions of such phenomena (such as pleasure; Hunt & Evans, 2008; Moore, 2008). In continuing to misalign with these realities, it has thus been suggested that such contemporary accounts foster continued stigmatisation; with particular forms of drug use, drug-using practices, and drug-using subjects still produced as unacceptable and abnormal in/through these seemingly normalising constructions (Moore & Fraser, 2006).

Support for this contention resides in the fact that stigma remains a pronounced and pervasive issue despite these contemporary discourses being well-established. As Seddon (2010) points out, for example, although there have been shifts in how illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are spoken of and thus constructed, “it could scarcely be said that levels of stigma and prejudice against users of drugs like heroin and crack have diminished in recent years” (p. 341). The continued proliferation of stigma in relation to illicit drug use despite this established movement away from strictly pathologising accounts thus indicates that the mess of divergent and disjunctive accounts still continues to produce understandings which fall short of accounting for the realities of such conduct. It also suggests that perhaps there are deeper processes which undergird the practice of

producing illicit drug use in terms of significant otherness. By deconstructing this mess, I hoped to examine how and why existing understandings are falling short and to subsequently to develop hypotheses about how best to account for these complex and diverse realities; with the underpinning objective of better understanding how to overcome the pronounced stigma and marginalisation that accompanies the use of illicit drugs.

1.3.3 Epistemic insults: Lesser citizens

Connected to the more explicit ways in which people who use illicit drugs are stigmatised is the way that constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects operate to disqualify such individuals from full or credible citizenship. This issue reflects and produces numerous assumptions about the 'otherness' of such individuals. As Valverde (1998) explains:

The individual who is in the throes of addiction or who is under the influence (i.e., intoxicated) is automatically seen as unable to talk freely and truthfully; their 'true self' has been hijacked and/or altered and thus what they say cannot be seen as 'authentic'.

The ability to interact truthfully and authentically is the foundation of liberal subjectivity and citizenship (Rose, 1996b). By precluding individuals who use illicit drugs from such citizenship, these ingrained accounts clearly produce pronounced forms of stigma and marginalisation. Indeed, seeing drug-using subjects as lacking the capacity to know and speak about their conduct and selves in a credible manner not only constructs them as lesser citizens but makes it possible to see and approach them as lesser humans, given that the concepts of authenticity and rationality are constructed as being at the core of how we delineate what it means to be human (Rance et al., 2012; see also Keane, 2003).

Rance and colleagues (2012) offer an interesting account of how the process of discrediting and dehumanising people who use illicit drugs takes place:

Philosopher Miranda Fricker (2007) uses the term 'epistemic insult' to describe the special sort of injustice that takes place when social prejudice undermines the level of credibility given to certain speakers—the process by which people are undermined specifically in their capacity to know, their capacity as a 'knower'. Fricker argues that to insult someone as a knower holds particular significance given that our capacity to pass on knowledge is so intimately tied up with our very

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status as rational beings. To be insulted in one's capacity as a knower is to be seen as a lesser rational being and ultimately, therefore, a lesser human being (p. 249).

People who use illicit drugs are clearly subject to this 'epistemic insult' on a routine basis, with their accounts and knowledges explicitly excluded or implicitly made absent in numerous ways. As David Moore (2008) highlights, "the discourses of drug users" are "subjugated knowledges' ...that struggle for equal legitimacy with the dominant discourses of medicine, psychology and epidemiology" (p. 354). In other words, what people who use illicit drugs have to say about their conduct is given limited credence when understandings of such conduct are formed in western liberal culture, with such authority granted instead to scientific knowledges. Consistent with this, people who use illicit drugs often report that the nuances of their individual experiences and circumstances are dismissed in health care settings, where treatment pathways are determined by medical and psychological models of substance abuse and dependence (Bell & Salmon, 2008; Fitzgerald et al., 2004; Fraser, 2010b). Similarly, an analysis of how hepatitis C is constructed in the Australian media identified that people who use illicit drugs are not quote in media texts as often as other parties (Pugh, 2008) and research on public opinion and drug policy in Australia highlighted that debate about such policies fails to include the voice of those who are affected by such policies (Lancaster, Ritter, & Stafford, 2013).

More subtle instances of this 'epistemic insult' can be found in the discourses of addiction treatment and recovery. As Reinerman (2005) describes, in order for people who use illicit drugs to have their accounts seen as acceptable and adequate, they must adopt the discourses of addiction and recovery (or various other medical and psychological discourses):

In effect, the accounts that putative 'addicts' give of their behaviours are not naturally occurring, objective descriptions of an unambiguous reality. Rather, accounts that get accepted as adequate, i.e., those which begin with the admission of 'addiction,' are produced when the messy details of life histories are organized by the discursive procedures (e.g., typification) applied in social control and therapeutic settings (p. 315).

What Reinerman's observation highlights is that when people who use illicit drugs form meanings and understandings of their experiences which fall outside preferred discursive frameworks these accounts are not "accepted as adequate" and thus exist as subjugated knowledges. As Reinerman describes, in order for such individuals to form accounts of their

conduct and of themselves that will be deemed acceptable they must simplify and organise “the messy details” of their experiences. This suggests therefore that the ingrained ways in which people who use illicit drugs are precluded from providing credible knowledges about their conduct also contribute to stigma and marginalisation, as these practices routinely subjugate the types of accounts which acknowledge and appreciate the complexities and messiness of drug-using practices and subjectivities.

The pronounced and pervasive ways in which people who use illicit drugs are subjected to such ‘epistemic insults’ is a dimension of the stigma and marginalisation of this population that is particularly relevant in a research context. This particular operationalisation of stigma is one that researchers have recourse to immediately address by prioritising research practices which emphasise the credibility of people who use illicit drugs as ‘knowers’. As will be outlined shortly, an emphasis on the voice of participants was a key principle through which this research pursued such an objective.

Additionally, this dimension of stigma and marginalisation is introduced here as it holds particular salience in relation to the line of inquiry I hoped to pursue through this research. Reinerman’s (2005) suggestion that the messy details of drug-using subjects’ lives are seen as incompatible with legitimate and credible ways of accounting for the phenomena of illicit drug use indicates that the pervasive ways in which such ‘epistemic insults’ operate constitutes a barrier to the development of sufficiently contextualised understandings of such conduct; understandings which could account for its diverseness, complexity, and messiness. Indeed, this suggests that perhaps it is because of the pervasive ways in which the knowledges of people who arguably have the greatest expertise about the complex phenomenology of illicit drug use are subjugated that the body of academic knowledge about such conduct is in such a mess. Attempts to remove of this barrier throughout this research, when examining the practices and subjectivities of illicit drug use, were thus approached as having the potential to generate better understandings of how the messy and complex ways in which illicit drug use takes place can be accounted for.

Consequently, I saw questions about the usefulness and effects of the mess of divergent and disjunctive accounts through which illicit drug use is produced in contemporary western liberal culture as needing to be asked of those people who take part in such conduct for two reasons. Firstly, this was a political move designed to counteract as much as possible the explicit and implicit ways in which such individuals find their accounts

excluded and subjugated. Secondly, this approach was taken to enable exploration of how participants accounted for the complexities and messy details of their drug use and themselves in the context of the mess of divergent and disjunctive possible accounts of such conduct and subjectivity.

1.3.4 Hidden stigma

Notably, much of the research into stigma and illicit drug use focuses on the experiences of people who inject illicit drugs, who are engaged in treatment, and those who are affected by HIV and/or hepatitis C. There has been less exploration of how stigma affects those people who use illicit drugs who are less likely to be visible as drug-using subjects due to a diminished need and/or preparedness to engage in drug-using communities and access treatment and health-care services. The fact that such individuals are less easily identifiable as being drug users and therefore are assumed to be less likely to be affected by stigma, may explain this trend. However, the pervasive and compelling ways in which illicit drug use is signified in stigmatising and marginalising terms in western liberal culture suggests that anyone who is engaged in such conduct is likely to be affected by stigma to some degree. While the forms of stigma they encounter may be associated with less marked forms of harm compared to those who are more visible as drug users (for example, those who inject, who are street-based, and/or who are engaged in treatment services), this does not preclude such individuals from experiencing deleterious effects as a result of stigma and marginalisation. Rather than focusing solely on those groups of individuals who are typically exposed to the most pronounced forms of stigma, therefore, I aimed to examine how people engaged in a variety of different types of illicit drug use are affected by stigma.

1.4 Political objectives

In being underpinned by poststructuralist thinking, my approach to conducting this research was informed by an understanding of the way that all forms of inquiry are shaped by the particular cultural, epistemological, political, and methodological positions of the researcher (see chapter two). Rather than attempting to eject the influence of these from the process of the inquiry, researchers who adopt a poststructuralist stance set out to bring them into the analytic frame (Creswell, 2013). Thus, drawing on the reflections of prominent anthropologist Michael Agar (2002), the two particular political goals which underpinned my approach to this research are outlined below.

In reflecting on his life history of engagement in the field of ethnographic and qualitative inquiry into illicit drug use, Agar (2002) writes:

A lot of us got into the qualitative business for more reasons than just its intellectual challenge. Qualitative serves political goals as well. One goal is the development of empathy. A good piece of qualitative work makes sense out of human differences in terms of human similarities. It shows the outsider how if he/she were an insider, he/she might very well act and think in similar ways. Since a large number of problems in the world can be explained by a lack of empathy, this goal strikes me as a worthy moral basis for the research. Another political goal is about “voices”. “Voices” means that the research should be a vehicle for words and actions of people who were researched (p. 253).

The fact that concerns with the extent to which people who use illicit drugs are stigmatised, marginalised, and dehumanised underpins this research makes the political goals of empathy and voice, which Agar describes as a worthy moral basis for any qualitative inquiry, particularly apposite objectives to pursue. In outlining these objectives throughout this section I aim to provide the reader with an understanding of the political positioning from which this research occurred and of how these goals of empathy and voice have shaped the process and outcomes of this research.

1.4.1 Empathy: Promoting human similarities and inclusion over differences and exclusion

As discussed above, dominant accounts of illicit drug use which produce and emphasise how people who use illicit drugs are different or abnormal run contrary to the emphasis on human similarities that creates empathy in research (Agar, 2002). By very definition, illicit drug use emblemises difference or otherness; it is *illegal*, *unlawful*, *illegitimate*, and *unacceptable*. There is thus a distinct absence of empathy in the ways in which illicit drug use is accounted for in western liberal culture. As discussed earlier, the prominence of such stigma or difference brings about significant harms for people who use illicit drugs (Link et al., 1997; Tindal et al., 2010). It thus seems that conducting research into the use of illicit drugs which examines avenues for fostering such empathy and should be a priority for AOD researchers. Although “the deconstructive enterprise does not of course aim to change things in and of itself, but to provide a critique” (Shildrick, 2000, p. 226), Burr (2003) cautions against research which limits itself to the processes of critique and deconstruction, stressing the importance of also taking part in the processes of creation and production. A key objective in conducting this research, therefore, was to generate questions about how we might be able to begin to establish a greater sense of empathy in how the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are constructed. In order to

generate such questions, therefore, this research aimed to develop a critical understanding of how and why empathy is so forcefully and intricately made absent from accounts of illicit drug use in western liberal culture.

1.4.2 Voice: Privileging the knowledge of people who use illicit drugs

Explaining drug use in terms of social determinants risks robbing drug users of their capacity to narrate their own accounts of how and why they use drugs, and to present alternative narratives to those of science, treatment professionals, and their friends. Opening up that space involves animating another important legacy of psychoanalysis, the importance of allowing users' voices to be heard, interpreted, analysed and disputed (valentine & Fraser, 2008, pp. 415-416).

As discussed earlier, people who use illicit drugs are routinely approached as ineligible to form and provide credible and valuable knowledge about their conduct and themselves. As valentine and Fraser (2008) emphasise, silencing the voices of such individuals in these ways not only brings about significant disenfranchisement and dehumanisation, but also means that understandings of illicit drug use are formed in isolation from a valuable, not to mention *key*, source of knowledge and narratives. Incorporation of the principle of voice as a guiding objective for this research was thus driven by both political and inquiry-driven motives.

The extent to which accounts of almost all other parties are privileged over those of people who use illicit drugs is a deeply ingrained inequality which is integral to the stigmatisation and marginalisation of such conduct and subjects. This research was thus designed with the objective of redressing this imbalance, by privileging the voice of such individuals, in mind. Underpinning this objective was also the aim of exploring the extent to which dominant accounts of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects poorly correspond with the realities of such conduct and subjectivities. Earlier it was suggested that the continued production of such inadequate understandings may be a key factor the continued stigmatisation of illicit drug use. It follows, therefore, that if the ways that people who use illicit drugs account for their conduct and subjectivities enable these inevitable complexities to be more adequately constructed, then placing an emphasis on the voice of such individuals may provide insight into how to address the issues of stigma and marginalisation. The objective of privileging the voice of participants was thus concerned with exploring the participants' take on the adequacy and effects of this mess of divergent and disjunctive accounts and on how they addressed any shortcomings in these accounts.

Critically however, this objective was also underpinned by the hope that, as Rance and Treloar (2015) found when exploring the experiences of people taking part in consumer participation in and AOD treatment service, providing a forum for the voice of people who use illicit drugs to be heard and privileged would facilitate some disruption of the pervasive dehumanisation such individuals encounter.

This objective of privileging participants' voice was pursued through particular methodological choices. As chapter two details, the primary methodology employed was qualitative interviews. However, the practice of conducting qualitative interviews alone was not considered sufficient to achieve these aims. As Cherubin (2005) describes:

So often, people are compelled to have an account for why certain things are happening in their lives through the use of psychological or medical language. Often their descriptions of their lives are therefore told in the voice of formal language bound to particular understandings of problems and philosophies or ideologies of life (p. 133).

The accounts formed in qualitative interviews, like those formed in counselling or therapy, can frequently still obscure a person's voice. Cherubin suggests that this can be overcome by "attending carefully" to the "everyday language...used by people to describe their experiences...explor[ing] stories with people in their own everyday words in ways that attend to the minute, particular, and seemingly insignificant details of their lives" (p. 133). She describes that "making a return to the vernacular can help the person to think afresh, and to explore the fit between the language that they are choosing to use and their own lived experience" (p. 133). As is discussed in chapter four, the collection and analysis of the interview data was thus designed with the objective of this return to the vernacular in mind.

1.5 Research rationale and questions

Rather than offering ways of accounting for the diversity and complexity of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects, attempts to pin down the 'real' nature of such phenomena and individuals throughout modern and contemporary western liberal history (Seddon, 2010) have produced a plethora of divergent and disjunctive accounts. Thus, despite the abundance of terms, theories, models, and constructs through which western liberal culture accounts for and responds to illicit drug use and people who engage in it, our understandings continue to inadequately account for the realities (which are often complex, contradictory, and messy) of such conduct and subjectivities. Interacting with this

significant shortcomings are two interrelated problems: a) the extent to which people who use illicit drugs experience pervasive and pronounced forms of stigma, marginalisation, and disenfranchisement; and b) the fact that understandings of illicit drug use tend to be characterised by a distinct absence of empathy and of the voice of those people who take part in such conduct. These intricately connected and far-reaching shortcomings suggest that what is needed is research which examines how the issues of divergent and disjunctive understandings interact with the issues of stigma, marginalisation, and dehumanisation *from the perspective of people who use illicit drugs*. I thus set out to address these shortcomings by questioning what people who use illicit drugs make of the ‘mess’ of divergent and disjunctive accounts of drug use, drug-using practices, and drug-using subjectivities which already exist. The specific questions that I set out to examine are presented below.

1.5.1 Fit and utility

In exploring differing accounts of illicit drug use and the issues of stigma, marginalisation, and disenfranchisement from the perspective of people who use illicit drugs, I was interested in seeing what the participants had to say about differing accounts of their conduct and subjectivities. In what they said, for example, was it apparent that they saw certain accounts as more poorly corresponding with the realities of their behaviour and selves, and others as aligning more closely with these realities? Did they consider the full range of divergent and disjunctive ways of accounting for illicit drug use relevant to some degree, or were there particular accounts that they deemed to be entirely inadequate? And, what was their take on the usefulness or relevance of forming understandings of illicit drug-using practices and subjects in divergent and disjunctive terms?

1.5.2 Effects

Built into the exploration of how well or poorly this mess, or components of it, accounted for their drug use and themselves were questions concerning the interaction between particular accounts of and responses to their conduct and selves and the experiences of stigma, marginalisation, and disenfranchisement. This included what the participants had to say about the different effects of differing accounts of their conduct and selves. Were there certain accounts, for example, which they spoke about as bringing into effect understandings, representations, and responses that were particularly stigmatising, marginalising, and disenfranchising? Conversely, were there particular accounts which they saw as having the effect of contesting or counteracting such stigma, marginalisation, and disenfranchisement?

1.5.3 Empathy

These lines of inquiry were also designed to explore how we might go about generating greater empathy in and through accounts of illicit drug use. In accounting for their own conduct and subjectivities, for example, did what the participants have to say about their conduct and subjectivities form understandings of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects which established a sense of empathy? And if so, what was it about these understandings which made such grounds for empathy possible? Alternatively, if empathy remained absent in what the participants had to say, I hoped to examine the knowledge practices which precluded such empathy; questioning how and why empathy was made absent and/or subverted.

1.5.4 Voice

All of the above questions were framed by the goal of privileging the voice of people who use illicit drugs; as this was identified as a significant shortcoming in how such conduct and subjects are accounted for in western liberal culture. It was thus considered important to analyse more than what was explicitly stated in the interviews, as certain meanings and statements potentially come to be obscured through various cultural and discursive practices (Burr, 2003; Cherubin, 2005; Martin & Stenner, 2004). Through the adoption of a layered analytic method (see chapter four) I thus set out to explore not only the accounts that participants were able to form, but also those which they were unable to form; and to explore the cultural, discursive, and deeper mythical/metaphorical processes which determined these possibilities and impossibilities. This line of inquiry thus involved engaging in exploration of the unconscious or un-articulate dimensions of the interviews.

1.5.5 Context

Given that a social constructionist epistemological stance shaped the above questions (see chapter two), it was also considered important to examine how this mess of divergent and disjunctive accounts of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects is produced and operates in the context of Australian and Western Australian culture. Questions concerning which accounts predominate in this context and about the effects of these accounts were thus posed in order to contextualise the exploration of the above questions from the perspective of people who use illicit drugs. This involved examining how illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are constructed in a selection of national and local media texts.

1.6 Overview of research approach

The epistemology and methodology of this research depart significantly from traditional psychological approaches to knowledge and research. The specific

epistemological and methodological frameworks of this research are explained in detail in chapter two. In this preliminary discussion I orient the reader to the overall approach taken to examine the above questions. In his book *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research*, John Law (2004) writes: “If the world is complex and messy, then at least some of the time we’re going to have to give up on simplicities” (p. 2). Founded in the epistemology of empiricism, psychological research has traditionally been shaped by the task of simplifying the complexities and messiness of the world. As suggested above however, this push for simplicity may in part account for the inadequacies in how we understand and respond to illicit drug use in western liberal culture; as such an approach prevents the formation of understandings and responses which acknowledge the complexities and messiness of such conduct and of the lives of those engaged in it. In order to research a) the mess of divergent and disjunctive ways in which illicit drug use is accounted for and b) the potential complexities and messiness of the realities of illicit drug-using practices and subjectivities, I thus saw the need to give up on simplicities and move beyond the positivist task of reductionism. Thus, epistemologically and methodologically I adopted a research approach that is more aligned with the poststructuralist orientation of critical social theory and research than it is with the traditions of positivist psychological inquiry. A detailed overview of poststructuralism is presented in chapter two. In this section however I establish the rationale for making this ‘poststructuralist turn’.

Through this research I set out to examine and deconstruct understandings that often operate in an unquestioned and automatic manner – understandings that are seen as ‘common sense’. Rhodes and Moore (2001) note that such understandings are often “unwittingly reinforced and reproduced by positivist deductive paradigms”, and thus that “qualitative research has a critical role to play in questioning ‘commonsense’ interpretations of drug use” (p. 291). One of the key distinctions they draw between qualitative research and that of behavioural-science is that unlike the linearity that characterises the latter, interpretations in qualitative findings are derived through more iterative and cyclical research processes (Rhodes & Moore, 2001). Thus despite the extent to which notions of simplicity and linearity exist as privileged and familiar approaches to psychological research, the risk was that adhering to such notions would have precluded me from pursuing the lines of inquiry outlined above. In the development and production of this research therefore I came to accept that in order to contribute meaningfully to discussions about how to address the above shortcomings it was unlikely that the process

and outcomes of this research would be simple and linear in form, but rather were likely to be messy, iterative, and cyclical.

Law (2004) suggests that despite efforts to execute research in a rigorous manner, in practice method is always a constant process of 'assemblage', whereby methodological components are interwoven in ways that are more implicit and impure. As Duff (2012) comments:

Experienced AOD researchers will no doubt find much that is familiar in Law's discussion of the uses of research methods in practice, particularly the improvisatory, spontaneous feel of method assemblage, which remains a feature of so much applied AOD research, notwithstanding the confident assurances of research grant applications and ethical review protocols (p. 269).

Giving up on simplicities in psychological inquiry thus is not necessarily about conducting less thought-through and carefully-executed processes but rather involves accepting a degree of unclarity, impurity, and improvisation in how methods are applied; departures from the norm which present numerous challenges given the extent to which positivist methodological theory is privileged (see also Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2010; Moore, 2002). Importantly however, from a poststructuralist standpoint this process of method assemblage—and its lack of clarity, certainty, and simplicity—is seen as adding to rather than detracting from the value of an inquiry, so long as it is made visible and incorporated into the analytic frame. The key to the integrity of poststructuralist research, then, is the extent to which the researcher makes transparent how the research questions, process, and outcomes have been shaped by particular political and cultural factors (Agger, 1991; Pillow, 2003). Importantly therefore, although my approach to this research at times departs from the orderliness, linearity, and objectivity of much psychological research, the messy, iterative, cyclical, and reflexive qualities of this approach were instrumental in ensuring the trustworthiness of my findings (see chapter two). Indeed, this departure from traditional methods was considered instrumental in making it possible to more adequately examine the messiness that, as I have outlined throughout this chapter, seems to characterise how illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are understood and responded to in western liberal culture.

Importantly, this move towards the less neat and less familiar epistemological and methodological approaches of critical research is not positioned here in opposition to more traditional psychological research, but rather as constituting an attempt to expand and

diversify how the discipline of psychology sees and forms knowledge – and thus how it sees and forms behaviours and subjects. Australian critical psychologists Lauren Breen and Dawn Darlaston-Jones (2010) suggest that “increased [epistemological and methodological] diversity within psychology would enhance the applicability and relevance of the profession to addressing social issues that would lead to meaningful social change, which would certainly increase the ‘real-world’ impact of the research.” (p. 5). As discussed, despite the production of increasingly diverse accounts of and responses to illicit drug use in western liberal culture, there has been limited meaningful social change in how such conduct and the people engaged in it are understood and treated (Duff, 2015; Hathaway, 2002; Seddon, 2010; Tupper, 2012). This suggests that in order to bring about such change we need to expand the repertoire of psychological research to include forms of inquiry that are less concerned with universalities, simplicities, and linearity, and more concerned with the nuanced, messy, and convoluted realities of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects.

The outcomes of this research substantiate the value of taking up this move to give up on simplicities, which in shaping the research approach necessarily also shaped the findings that emerged. As is outlined in chapters seven and eight, the research findings pose critical questions about the potential impacts of an embedded propensity in western liberal culture to rely on knowledge practices that perpetuate the production of insufficiently complex or messy understandings of the world. Indeed, the findings raise questions about how an unconscious reluctance (both individually and collectively) to give up on certain simplicities—such as dichotomous logic—may pose a powerful barrier to the development of meaningful changes in how illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are constructed in western liberal culture. In particular, the findings raise questions about the way that certain knowledge practices (e.g., the logic of dichotomy) and associated affective forces (e.g., a sense of threat/fear) operate in unseen and unchallenged (i.e., less conscious or unconscious) ways to prevent the formation of less simplistic, more adequate understandings of the acts and subjects of illicit drug use. Through the use of a layered analytic method (see chapters four to seven), then, the findings suggest that poststructuralist deconstructions of the inadequacies in how western liberal culture constructs illicit drug use may benefit from the inclusion of certain aspects of psychoanalytic thinking. Indeed, they suggest that as well as attending to those knowledge practices that have become embedded in western liberal culture’s history and politics and hence in less conscious (i.e., less visible) and powerful ways, critical inquiry may benefit

from also attending to the role that unseen affective forces may play in producing and maintaining existing arrangements of knowledge/power.

It is important to note however that, in keeping with the exploratory, iterative and reflexive research approach adopted, these outcomes are the product of a process of extended engagement and growth, not only with the data but with my work as clinical psychologist in a metropolitan drug and alcohol service. Unlike the process of conducting traditional psychological research, therefore, the significance of this theme of less conscious ways of knowing was not identified at the outset of the research. Instead, the significance of these less conscious knowledge practices and affective forces emerged through the layered analysis of the interview data and in interaction with growth in my clinical experience and expertise, which in turn produced growth in how I interpreted the findings of this analysis. It is for this reason that these themes are not fully introduced, defined and expanded upon until chapters seven and eight, as their significance cannot be appropriately conveyed without detailed discussion of how they emerged. Thus, unlike a traditional thesis, this document reads as an emerging story; reflecting the way that this process of growth and development made it possible for me to arrive at interpretations that early on in the research were unseen and unknown. As is outlined in the final section of this introductory chapter, therefore, the final step in my endeavour to set aside certain simplicities in conducting this research concerned the approach I took to structuring this document and the story it tells.

1.7 Outline of document

Pillow (2003) emphasises the value of producing examples of qualitative research which make explicit the discomfiting realities of the messy and incomplete nature of such research (see also Law, 2004). Likewise, Law and Urry (2004) note that the “methodological decentring”, the capacity to understand and practice “the complex and the elusive”, that is required “if social science is to interfere in the realities of that world, to make a difference, to engage in an ontological politics, and to help shape new realities...will be uncomfortable” (p. 404). However the processes and standpoints adopted to determine which documents get published and proposals get funded (Jaeger & Rosnow, 1988; Moore, 2002; Rhodes, Stimson, Moore & Bourgois, 2010) or (as in my case) the dominant positions from which we are taught how to read and write ‘good’ research can pose a challenge to the capacity to realise this potential that lies in qualitative research and to the tolerance of such discomfort when writing poststructuralist research. Thus although this document adopts a ‘tweaking’ of certain conventions, its structure does not entirely depart from the familiar conventions

of empirical psychology. Broadly however, I have endeavoured to seek out the less comfortable by adopting the more reflexive, more personal, and more emotive tone of poststructuralist writing; a move towards the uncomfortable that, as it turns out, may be precisely what is lacking in how we go about constructing and approaching the acts and subjects of illicit drug use (see chapter eight). Moreover, I have chosen to reflect the exploratory, reflexive, and iterative research approach in allowing this document to read as an emerging story. Indeed, mirroring the deconstructive method that was used to analyse the interview data (see chapters four to seven), the processes, context and outcomes of the research are presented a layer at a time, with each subsequent layer adding depth and breadth to the overall story.

The research framework is presented in chapter two, in which epistemological and methodological frameworks, as well as issues regarding research quality, are discussed. I then move on to present the objectives, methods and findings of the first part of the research—the contextual analysis—in chapter three. The second part of the research—the intensive interview analysis—is introduced in chapter four, where I discuss the interview methodology and analytic framework. The findings from the interview data are presented in chapters five through to seven; throughout which I also present some preliminary interpretations and critical reflections. The overall story is then presented in the final chapter, where I draw together the key findings that emerged from both parts of the research and discuss my critical reflections on what these findings may add to discussions about how to generate a greater capacity to bring about meaningful change in how illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are understood and approached.

Chapter Two

2. Research Framework

In this chapter I establish the rationale for the research approach taken to explore the mess of divergent and disjunctive accounts of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects. I aim to introduce to the reader the epistemological stance which shaped the methodological approaches that I adopted throughout the research. In particular, I discuss the influences of social constructionist and poststructuralist thinking. I then provide an overview of the methodological frameworks that were adopted, including substantive theorising, contextual analysis, intensive interviewing, and Causal Layered Analysis. I conclude with a discussion of the issue of research evaluation; outlining the criteria and practices that were adopted to ensure the quality of the research findings.

2.1 A critical qualitative approach

Much of what we know about illicit drug use has been produced through positivist medical, epidemiological, psychological, and social research which privileges particular ways of knowing and methodologies over others. The paradigm of positivism rests upon and produces particular assumptions about the world and reality (i.e., that they are fixed or stable and can be directly observed through one's senses), about the nature of such knowledge or truth (i.e., as singular and universal), and about how knowledge of the world and reality can be formed (i.e., through objective observation and measurement). It is thus through the epistemological gaze of positivist inquiry that questions about fixed, universal, and directly observable definitions of phenomena such as illicit drug use become intelligible. Arguably therefore, positivist assumptions about knowledge and the world have played a key role in the proliferation of divergent and disjunctive accounts of illicit drug use; with varying iterations in medical, psychological, or social theory each seen as unveiling the 'true' nature of such behaviour, resulting in numerous truth claims that are positioned in discrete and opposing terms.

Scholars in numerous areas of social inquiry challenge the overly prescriptive, reductive, and decontextualised effects of these positivist assumptions, methodologies, and the truth claims they generate (Agar, 2002; Bourdieu, 1996; Burr, 2003; Gergen, 1985, 1996; Law, 2004; Mol & Law, 2002; Wicker, 1989). In particular, critical work suggests that the status of positivism as the dominant paradigm through which the majority of social research is conducted limits our ability to form sufficiently contextualised, localised, and politicised understandings of social and cultural phenomena (Bourgois, 1999, 2000; Duff, 2008; Fraser & Moore, 2011; valentine & Fraser, 2008; Rhodes, 2000; Rhodes & Moore,

2001). The dominance of positivism has thus been criticised for limiting our capacity to adequately respond to social issues, or worse, for generating inappropriate (and often stigmatising, marginalising, and disenfranchising) responses. Rhodes (2000) describes the effects of this paradigm's dominance in the context of drug and alcohol theory and policy, stating that

...common-sense interpretations of drug use [are] often unwittingly reinforced and reproduced by positivist paradigms. In the absence of qualitative research, there is a danger of perpetuating understandings of drug use which are devoid of relevance or meaning for participants. This, in turn, can encourage the formation of policy or the development of interventions which are inappropriate or ineffective, and, at worst, counterproductive. (p. 30).

Such critique thus suggests that the extent to which positivist research questions, methods, and findings have dominated how knowledge of illicit drug use has historically been formed in western liberal culture may explain why the divergent and disjunctive accounts of such conduct and subjects fit so poorly with the realities of drug-using practices and subjectivities.

Such concerns about the effects of positivism's dominance are increasingly being expressed within particular areas of psychology. Critical and community psychologists, for example, problematise positivist methodologies as ill-suited to asking the kinds of research questions and engaging in the types of research that can lead to meaningful social change (Bishop et al., 2002; Bishop & Browne, 2006; Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2010). Thus, despite its privileged status (e.g., through research funding and publication practices – see Moore, 2002; Rhodes & Moore, 2001; Rhodes et al., 2010), positivist research's failure to produce meanings that resonate with participants and its potential to produce ineffective or counterproductive outcomes highlights that there exists a strong need to examine illicit drug use, and how we account for it, from non-positivist standpoints. As Law and Urry (2004) put it, "it is time for social science, which grew up in the nineteenth century, to review much of its methodological inheritance. That inheritance in considerable measure reflects nineteenth-century preoccupations: with fixing, with demarcating, with separating" (p. 403); preoccupations which have clearly influenced the development of the mess of divergent and disjunctive accounts which produce illicit drug use in fixed and opposing terms. Importantly, then, if we are to produce localised and relevant meanings and thus generate possibilities for effective outcomes and social change in relation to illicit drug use

we must engage in alternative methodological approaches. It is for this reason that Rhodes (2000) refers to qualitative methodologies as “a prerequisite for understanding and responding to drug use” (p. 30).

In contrast to quantitative methodologies, which predominantly rest upon and reflect positivist assumptions, qualitative methodologies lend themselves to the suspension of such assumptions and to the adoption of more critical epistemological positions. As Rhodes and Moore (2001) explain, “every method of data collection and interpretation necessarily shapes the findings it produces, yet qualitative methods and inductive designs are arguably better suited to *questioning* modes of data interpretation and production than are quantitative and deductive designs” (p. 285, emphasis original). Importantly however, the term qualitative encompasses a broad array of research practices (Barbour, 2001), not all of which generate the kinds of critical inquiry that Rhodes and Moore (2001) refer to. As Fitzgerald (2000) explains, the application of qualitative methodology alone is not sufficient for the production of critical research. He notes that the critical potential of qualitative methods can be undermined if positivist notions of knowledge and reality are subscribed to, as this paradigm “limits the sorts of questions that can be explored” and generates descriptive, uncritical research “rather than qualitative research that looks explicitly at the relationships between broader drug policies and individual drug-using practices” (p. 310).

The capacity to ask the kinds of questions and conduct the kind of critical research than can lead to more localised meanings, more effective outcomes, and greater opportunity for social change in relation to illicit drug use thus requires the adoption of qualitative methodologies that are underpinned by alternative epistemologies. Indeed, by making inductive methodologies and alternative epistemological stances available, qualitative research approaches present a unique opportunity to “challenge the assumed objectivity of commonsense understandings of drug use” and facilitate “the discovery of plural—and competing—interpretations of drug use which often fall outside the more restricted interpretative frameworks championed by positivist and quantitative research” (Rhodes & Moore, 2001, p. 288). It was thus apparent that in order to ask critical questions about the ways in which illicit drug use is accounted for in Australia, and to have the capacity to produce the kinds of complex and messy themes which are grounded in the multiple realities of such conduct, a qualitative research approach was essential. More than this however, it was apparent that the particular qualitative approach I adopted needed to be situated in an epistemological position and methodological design that would facilitate the type of inductive inquiry and alternative epistemological logic that Rhodes and Moore

(2001) refer to. Below, I outline the particular epistemological and methodological frameworks underpinning this inquiry and explain how these were suited to the critical objectives discussed in chapter one.

2.2 Epistemological underpinnings

2.2.1 Social constructionism

Much critical social research is underpinned by the epistemological assumptions of social constructionism. Social constructionist thinking originated from the combined influences of scholars in cultural and literature studies, philosophy, and linguistics who began to question the fundamental assumptions of modernist thinking – posing critical questions about the notions of truth, reality, reason and rationality which have dominated western intellectual and cultural practices since the period of enlightenment (Burr, 2003). In particular, social constructionism poses a direct challenge to essentialist thinking by seeing knowledge and reality not as objective phenomena but as products of social, cultural, economic, historical, and political processes. More specifically, social constructionism proposes that the world, events, objects, and people do not exist as fixed entities that can be observed or discovered, but rather are socially constructed (i.e., made knowable and real) through language. As the meanings signified through language vary according to the context in which such language is used, how it is used, and who is using it, each construction of a phenomenon is understood to be socially, culturally, and historically specific (Rose, 1999). Thus “social constructionist approaches to knowledge posit that what we know about drugs, and about reality more broadly, even our scientific knowledge of them is the product of social relations, of our values and histories” (Fraser & Moore, 2011, p. 6).

In its most radical forms social constructionism thus proposes that everything is relative; that the meanings constructed through language are continually in flux and thus that knowledge and realities can never be secured (Burr, 2003; Williams, 2005). Other critical scholars argue however that such claims obscure the way that particular knowledges, structures, and realities come to be so privileged and entrenched that they achieve a strong degree of constancy and stability over time and thus appear to be fixed and not open to question (Sarason, 1996). The keystone of all forms of social constructionist thinking and research however is the acknowledgement of the “constructedness” (Fraser & Moore, 2011, p. 7) of all knowledge, even (and perhaps especially) that which has come to be seen as fixed over time. Thus, through emphasising this constructed nature of what we know, “social constructionism insists that we take a

critical stance towards our taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world, including ourselves” (Burr, p. 3).

Critical psychologists Breen and Daralaston-Jones (2010) contend that it is this insistence on a critical stance towards what is known which makes a social constructionist position one that provides the greatest recourse for engaging in research which is more sensitive to the complexities of social realities. They argue that the adoption of this epistemological stance is essential if psychology is to improve upon its social relevance and its capacity to promote social justice, as a constructionist position “allows, or more accurately expects, multiple realities to coexist in highly complex settings and which more fully represents social realities” (p. 8). Indeed, they argue that the dominance of positivism within the discipline makes psychology poorly positioned to conduct research that socially relevant and that is consistent with a critical and social justice agenda. More than this, I would argue it is also possible that psychology’s reliance on positivist thinking when attempting to understand complex social issues has the potential to generate harmful effects (such as the stigmatising, marginalising, and disenfranchising effects of divergent and disjunctive accounts of illicit drug use – see chapter one). Thus Breen and Daralaston-Jones’ (2010) call for psychology to diversify its research activities beyond the traditions of positivism could be framed not just as an opportunity to improve the social relevance of the discipline but also as an ethical imperative. Conducting psychological research into illicit drug use from a social constructionist position thus is considered here to be not only a worthy intellectual task but also a vital ethical one.

It is important to clarify that in insisting on a critical stance in relation to all forms of knowledge social constructionism does not call for the abolition of certain knowledges but rather emphasises the importance of acknowledging that any account of the world or its subjects is not fixed, rigid, and universal and instead exists as one of many possible accounts. Thus the primary objective of critical research is to make what we currently know “less rigid”:

The goal of critical research is to disturb present power relations through making problematic our categories and evoking other places, other scenarios of the future. Through this distance, the present becomes less rigid; indeed, it becomes remarkable, amenable to critique (Inayatullah, 1998, p. 387).

In contrast to positivist notions of identifying the ‘right’ categories and establishing fixed theories of social and psychological phenomena, it is this emphasis on making problematic

current categories or challenging particular ways of viewing the world which makes a social constructionist epistemology so ideally suited to the current inquiry, as it forces the researcher to attend to and problematise the social, political and historical dynamics that create the knowledges and conditions being examined (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994). As previously highlighted, my intention in conducting this research was not to discover the most accurate account of illicit drug use but rather to question the usefulness and effects of the disjunctive and divergent nature of those accounts which tend to dominate understandings of illicit drug use in Australia. That this objective was developed over other more positivist research questions highlights the social constructionist thinking which underpinned my approach, without which such critically-informed questions could not have been developed. This is in keeping with Bishop, Sonn, Drew, and Contos' (2002) reflection that social constructionism does "not so much inform our thinking as give voice to many of the issues and concerns that ha[ve] emerged from our research and practice" (p. 497).

2.2.1.1 Discourse

How the epistemological stance of social constructionism extended upon my pre-existing critical concerns is in its emphasis on language as not merely a descriptive or representational device but rather as a productive device – asserting that it is through language that the world is produced as knowable and real (Foucault, 1972). Discourse is understood to be the set of rules which determine what becomes knowable and real, and what does not. In operating to both 'rule in' and 'rule out' particular definitions and understandings, discourse has the effect of governing not just what we say (and do not say) but also what we do (and do not do) (Hall, 1997; see also Bailey, 2005). An understanding of discourse as productive of knowledge/power—indeed, as productive of reality—in this way thus emphasises the importance of understanding the *effects* of the way the world is talked about or account for (Fraser & Moore, 2011). Adopting such an understanding of language or discourse as productive in this way thus meant that the effects of how illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are constructed became central to this inquiry.

From a social constructionist position, therefore, the divergent and disjunctive accounts of illicit drug use are necessarily seen as not just describing illicit drug use but as delimiting what can be known, said, and done in relation to the behaviour of consuming particular substances and in relation to the people engaged in such behaviour. For example, the discourses of addiction 'rule out' the possibility of talking about the person who is addicted, be it to drugs, sex, or shopping (see Sedgwick, 1994), as being disciplined. Likewise, the discourses of addiction 'rule in' the possibility of addiction becoming the

addicted individual's master identity (Keane, 2002). Accordingly, these discourses can be understood to 'rule out' the possibility of seeing people who are addicted as 'normal' and 'rule in' stigmatising and marginalising ways of treating such individuals. Importantly, these implications extend beyond the ways in which people who use illicit drugs are accounted for and responded to by others to include how they account for and respond to themselves.

2.2.1.2 Subjectivity

Subjectivity thus refers to the sense of self that is constructed through social interaction with others and with the discourses which demarcate (or position) what we do and who or what we are (Lupton, 1995). Accordingly, established by "our occupation of subject positions within discourse", subjectivity determines our experiences of the world and of ourselves by delimiting:

our sense of who we are and what is therefore possible and not possible for us to do, what is right and appropriate for us to do, and what is wrong and inappropriate for us to do thus all derive from (Burr, 2003, p. 146).

When making sense of what they do and who they are, therefore, the person who uses illicit drugs is likewise bound to the sets of rules or discourses they encounter through social interaction. Importantly, although people can choose to take up certain subject positions and to reject others this process is limited by the discourses that are made available in a given cultural and historical context (Davies & Harre, 1999; Lupton, 1995; Martin & Stenner, 2004). This suggests then that ways in which people who use illicit drugs make sense of their conduct and identity are directly influenced by the dominant ways in which illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are accounted for. Martin and Stenner (2004) describe, for example, that "people with experience of heroin use cannot 'escape' the discourses that define what is known (or what we think we know) about their conduct; they may only position themselves and be positioned in relation to these" (p. 6).

A social constructionist standpoint thus sees accounts of illicit drug use as powerful practices which impact profoundly on the lives of people who use illicit drugs; their effects extend far beyond acts of description and representation. Once again, therefore, the adoption of this epistemological framework establishes a deeply ethical rationale for interrogating the mess of divergent and disjunctive ways in which such conduct is accounted for and the effects of such accounts (i.e., how they position people who use illicit drugs and what such positions make possible/impossible). Although such assertions about the performative effects of how we account for illicit drug use are located within a

constructionist epistemological position they draw heavily on the work of poststructuralist scholars, who take the more radical stance towards the production of knowledge and reality referred to earlier. The influence of poststructuralist thinking on this research is discussed in the next section.

In summary, by making visible “the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world (including themselves)” (Gergen, 1985, p. 266), the adoption of a social constructionist approach to research aims to disrupt the rigidity of our knowledge and discursive practices in the hope that we can begin to understand social issues in more contextualised, less limiting, and more socially just ways. The critical stance which defines social constructionism makes this epistemological standpoint the most appropriate position for conducting research which aims to cast a critical gaze upon the many differing ways in which we go about accounting for illicit drug use and drug-using subjects and to speculate about the effects of these discursive practices. As noted, the adoption of this critical stance not only constitutes a move which can produce more socially relevant psychological research about illicit drug use, but arguably also constitutes a necessary ethical move that is consistent with the ethic of reflecting on the effects of our practice – an ethic that lies at the core of the discipline of psychology (Australian Psychological Society, 2007).

2.2.2 Poststructuralism

In addition to being grounded in a social constructionist epistemology, my approach to this research incorporated elements of poststructuralist thinking and practice which constitutes a more deeply or radically critical stance. Beginning in the 1970s a number of philosophers and critical theorists, such as Foucault (1972) and Derrida (1976), put forth different ways of challenging the structuralist assertion that human experience is determined by underlying, fixed structures. In keeping with a constructionist epistemology, these scholars rejected essentialist, determinist, and naturalist assumptions which had dominated modern western thinking. However, poststructuralist thinking extends upon that of social constructionism in the emphases it places on the never-ending and unfixed nature of what is constructed. Drawing on the work of Mol (1999), Fraser (2010a) writes that this perspective sees knowledges and realities as “always being made and remade” through ever-changing textual, historical, and cultural practices (p. 233). Thus, although some constructions achieve a lasting sense of stability (Sarason, 1996) and it is far easier to produce certain constructions over others (Law & Urry, 2004), a poststructuralist position encourages recognition that all constructions of knowledge are never fixed but rather are a

produce of a confluence of cultural, historical, social, structural, political, and material factors.

Further, from a poststructuralist position differing constructions of illicit drug use are understood to not just produce “different *perspectives*” on such conduct but to produce “different *realities*” (Law & Urry, 2004, p. 397, emphasis original). For example, in contrast to a positivist approach which “assumes drugs simply to be self-evidently concrete entities possessed of intrinsic characteristics and producing predictable results” a poststructuralist approach “sees drugs and their effects as *made* in discourse, practice, and politics” (Fraser & Moore, 2011, p. 1, emphasis added). From a poststructuralist position it is thus assumed that there is no single reality of what a drug is and what it does but rather multiple realities that are produced via multiple confluences of discourse, practice, and policy. Such thinking thus insists that we recognise the powerful effects of how we account for illicit drug use and of drug-using subject; encouraging us to see that these accounts do not just describe but shape the realities of people’s experiences (of the drug and of themselves). In fostering an appreciation of the power that is tied up in accounts of the world, the thinking of poststructuralists thus further established the rationale for interrogating the divergent and disjunctive ways in which illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are accounted for in western liberal culture.

Predominantly stemming from the work of Foucault (1979; 1980), poststructuralists emphasise that power must be understood as operating in diffuse and productive as well as centralised and repressive ways. Specifically, they propose that power is not solely exercised through the practices of central institutions such as the church and state but rather is distributed as social, discursive, and historical forces play out (i.e., as knowledges and realities are constructed) in day-to-day interactions. As Burr (2003) states, “Foucault therefore does not see power as some form of possession, which some people have and others don’t, but as an effect of discourse” (p. 68). Poststructuralism thus contends that when we account for phenomena and subjects we are not only taking part in producing particular forms of knowledge but also in producing particular arrangements of power. Indeed, “for poststructuralists, the exercise of power and the production of knowledge are inseparable” (Martin & Stenner, 2004, p. 398), they are “less like a marriage, more like two sides of the same coin” (Richer, 1992, p. 111).

Understanding power as operating in this way suggests that bringing about change in particular arrangements of power (e.g., where certain groups of people are routinely

positioned in disenfranchising ways and thus routinely experience stigma and marginalisation) requires change in how the conduct and subjectivities of this group are produced or accounted for in textual, cultural, and social practices. Importantly, this does not translate into the privileging of alternative discourses, as Foucault “saw the possibilities for the appropriation of discourses as being entirely unpredictable and their possible future effects as open ended” (Burr, 2003, p. 78). Rather, this translates into the need to destabilise current arrangements of knowledge/power in order to disrupt those ‘common sense’ understandings of phenomena or subjects through which inequitable realities are produced and through which more equitable productions are precluded. As Burr (2003) describes:

[Foucault’s] point was that if we can understand the origins of our current ways of understanding ourselves, we can begin to question their legitimacy and resist them. In doing this, he also aims to bring to the fore previously marginalised discourses, to give voice to those whose accounts of life cannot be heard within the prevailing knowledges – the voices of the mad, the delinquent, the abnormal, and the disempowered (p. 78).

Ultimately, opening up the possibility of accounting for such marginalised groups in different terms is understood to reshape the realities of such conducts and subjects – in accounting for them differently they are not only experienced differently but they *become* different forms of conduct and subjects. As Fraser (2010a) explains, it is this assertion that social realities can be remade in this way which underscores the political purchase of poststructuralism. Before expanding upon this, I briefly introduce how the practice of poststructuralist analysis can bring about such disruptive and productive effects.

Poststructuralists have proposed numerous practices through which dominant systems of meaning-making or of knowledge/power can be disrupted. Indeed, because the work of poststructuralists places such emphasis on the practices or techniques of disruption, Williams (2005) suggests that poststructuralism is more accurately defined as a practice. The term deconstruction is often used to broadly capture different approaches to poststructural practice. In conducting this research I thus employed a broad concept of deconstruction as the guiding principle through which the current arrangements of knowledge/power which produce the social realities of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects in stigmatising and marginalising terms were explored. This broad understanding of deconstruction is captured by Burr (2003): “The way that discourses construct our

experience can be examined by 'deconstructing' these texts, taking them apart and showing how they work to present us with a particular vision of the world, and thus enabling us to challenge it" (p. 18). In keeping with the understandings of power/knowledge described above, the intent of pulling apart texts in this way is not to formulate assertions about which discourses to privilege, but rather to destabilise the apparent fixedness and completeness of dominant knowledge structures. In the current research therefore the aim of deconstruction was thus not to add to what is known but to explore "limits and incompletenesses" of what is known (Law, 2004, p. 83), as this is understood to be a mechanism through which the totalising effects of current arrangements of knowledge/power can be loosened and potentially problematised (Richer, 1992). It was thus hoped that this practice of deconstruction would make it possible to challenge the totalising claims which underpin practices of stigma and exclusion.

A key aspect of deconstructive analyses is "to break down the oppositions by which we are accustomed to think" (Sarup, 1993, p. 38) by disrupting claims of settled oppositions such as self/other (Ang, 2003), male/female (Butler, 1993), volition/compulsion (Seear & Fraser, 2010a; Sedgwick, 1994). Indeed, poststructuralist thinking, in particular that of Derrida (1976), places emphasis on the importance of recognising how ostensibly opposing terms are in fact reliant upon one another. It is thus a position which invites researchers to undo the need for such dichotomisations (Sarup, 1993). Importantly, the production of binary oppositions is considered by some to undergird modern and contemporary understandings of illicit drug use and drug-using subjectivity and play a key role in producing the stigmatising and marginalising effects of how we account for illicit drug use (Fraser, 2010a; Fraser & Moore, 2008; Sedgwick, 1994; Seear & Fraser, 2010a; Wolfe, 2007). Employing deconstructive practices, such authors have all made visible the interdependence of terms such as volition and compulsion and in doing so have worked to disrupt the hegemony of these essentialist knowledge/power structures in shaping the realities of illicit drug using practices and subjectivities. Thus a poststructuralist position and the practice of deconstruction were considered essential to this research.

This use of deconstructive practice as a recourse for addressing the stigmatisation and marginalisation of people who use illicit drugs is consistent with what Williams (2005) states about the benefits of a poststructuralist approach. He describes poststructuralism's capacity to unsettle dominant, accepted truths and oppositions as assisting in endeavours to address social injustices because it generate opportunities to resist and disrupt the established arrangements of power through which practices of discrimination and

exclusion (e.g., on the basis of sex, gender, race, wealth, etc.) occur. It is for this reason that researchers such as Seear and Fraser (2010a) call for more research examining such settled oppositions in relation to illicit drug use. In particular, they argue that there is a need for research which examines the ways in which drug policies and practices are shaped by binaries such as volition/compulsion, order/chaos, active/passive, as they connect the limitations in such policies and practices to the effects of these ingrained, dichotomising assumptions. For such researchers, therefore, the move to challenge such assumptions—a move that a poststructuralist approach makes possible—is vital if the shortcomings in how the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are understood and approached are to be overcome. There was thus a strong rationale for adopting a deconstructive approach when examining the mess of divergent and disjunctive accounts of illicit drug use. Clearly, the fact that what I set out to explore was the issue of divergence and disjuncture signalled the need to adopt such an approach. Critically however, the adoption of a poststructuralist approach was also understood to be consistent with the political objectives of this research, as such positioning can assist in giving voice to marginalised populations (Burr, 2003; Williams, 2005).

Poststructuralism's rejection of absolutes and push to think in terms of multiple, ever-changing and incomplete truths and realities has often generated significant opposition. Its emphasis on critique and deconstruction, for example, has led to claims of nihilism (Edwards, Ashmore & Potter, 1995; Willig, 1999). Poststructuralists cogently contest such claims however. Williams (2005), for example, emphasises that the "destabilisation" of dominant arrangements of knowledge/power which poststructuralism generates is not a destructive process but rather a constructive one which can bring about "ethically positive" effects (p. 5). Indeed, he goes on to explain that "the turn away from absolutes in poststructuralism has not hindered political action; it has given it a different form" (Williams, 2005, p. 7). Consistent with this, Fraser (2010a) describes poststructuralist approaches to research as gaining political purchase through their emphasis on the unfixed nature of knowledge claims and the realities they produce as this opens up the possibility that knowledge and reality can be remade in more equitable or appropriate terms. Further, Law and Urry (2004) contest claims that poststructuralism is nihilistic and overly relativistic by emphasising that the constructedness of social realities "*does not make them any less real*" (p. 395, emphasis original). They describe their position as

neither relativist nor realist. Instead, it is that the real is produced in thoroughly non-arbitrary ways, in dense and extended sets of relations. It is produced with

considerable effort, and it is much easier to produce some realities than others (pp. 395-396).

For Law and Urry (2004), the political potential of poststructuralist approaches to social research lies in their capacity to pose questions and form hypotheses about “what should be brought into being” (p. 396). They suggest that through understanding how particular social realities have come to be brought into being through various cultural, textual, historical, and methodological practices and through understanding the limits of these constructions it becomes possible to speculate about how such realities might differ (and be improved upon) if they could be known and produced in different (i.e., less limiting and exclusionary) terms – such as in terms of fleeting, multiple, sensory, distributed, emotional, and kinaesthetic processes (pp. 403-404). The adoption of poststructuralist positioning and practice is thus understood to provide an opportunity to engage in research which has the potential to produce understandings (and realities) of illicit drug use that are sufficiently complex and messy, and therefore which disrupt the stigmatising and marginalising effects of producing such conduct and subjects in fixed and absolute terms.

2.3 Methods

The adoption of social constructionist epistemology and incorporation of poststructuralist thinking clearly requires an approach to method that contrasts with the traditions of psychological research; involving the use of more critically-oriented methodological tools. As noted earlier, the use of qualitative methods is not sufficient for the production of a critical approach to research. Rather, as Charmaz (2004) explains below, it is through the constant re-evaluation of not only the methods we use but also how we apply them that critical research occurs:

As the “qualitative revolution” (Denzin & Lincoln 1994, p. ix) gained ground during the past 25 years, many researchers have come to use qualitative methods mechanically. We can move away from Mechanical Methods and use methods to expedite learning. Methods are merely tools—but not automatic ones. Methods should offer reasons and routes, but not recipes. Give first attention to the phenomenon itself, rather than the methods to explore it. As Meadows and Morse (2001) state, researchers should change their strategies when they do not obtain the necessary data for studying their settings. Persistence, diligence, and creativity are more essential than methods per se (Charmaz & Mitchell, 1996). How might we avoid using Mechanical Methods and turn toward learning? (p. 987).

One possible collection of answers to Charmaz's (2004) question about how to operationalise such re-evaluations of method (i.e., as a less prioritised, less rigid, more flexible, and more creative tool) and a non-mechanical approach is provided in a paper by ecological psychologist Allan Wicker (1989; see also Wicker & August, 2000). His paper outlines how psychological researchers can engage in inquiries that are consistent with the principles that Charmaz (2004) describes above; suggesting how psychology can turn away from the 'methods-as-recipes' approach and instead engage with method in a way that promotes deeper learning. Before discussing the specific methods applied, I begin this section with an outline of Wicker's suggestions, as these reflect not only this project's critical approach to method but its overall design.

2.3.1 Re-evaluating methodological considerations: A substantive theorising approach

Over 20 years ago Wicker (1989) expressed concern about the extent to which psychological research has been restricted by the methodologically-driven approaches of positivist inquiry. He contended that a key limitation of positivist approach to research is the emphasis it places on methodological considerations over either conceptual or substantive concerns; suggesting that this steadfast privileging of method has meant that research in psychology has been limited to research approaches which fail to be sensitive to the "subtleties and nuances of psychological and social events" and instead produce claims of "universality" and "generality" that have limited substantive relevance (p. 532). He thus proposed that rather than limiting itself to methodologically-driven inquiry psychology should expand its repertoire to include research approaches in which the conceptual and substantive domains are prioritised over that of method. This inquiry thus was modelled on Wicker's suggestions about research process, which he termed substantive theorising, as his concerns and recommendations clearly remain relevant to psychology today (Bishop et al., 2013; Breen & Daralaston-Jones, 2010) and, although not explicitly developed in Wicker's (1989) arguments, offer a framework through which psychological research can operationalise constructionist and poststructuralist epistemological and methodological positions.

A substantive theorising approach rejects the positivist requirement that we adapt either the conceptual or the substantive dimensions of an inquiry to the parameters of particular conventions in research design, measurement, and analysis. In contrast, taking a substantive theorising approach to research requires that methodological choices be driven

by the conceptual and substantive concerns of a given inquiry. In offering a simplified explanation of what such an approach to research might look like, Wicker (1989) proposes two different scenarios researchers can follow:

- (a) placing conceptual concerns first, substantive area second, and methodology third, and
- (b) placing substantive area first, conceptual concerns second, and methodology third. In each case the methods selected are constrained by both the substantive domain being investigated and the conceptual framework (p. 535).

According to Wicker (1989), a key value in deprioritising methodological decisions in this way is that it prompts researchers to become more reflective in the methodological choices they make; requiring that choices in relation to method are made “on the basis of their potential to reveal new information on the [conceptual and/or substantive] domain, rather than on dogma proclaiming the superiority of any particular approach” (p. 539).

Approaching research in this way thus requires methodological choices be made reflexively rather than prescriptively. As is discussed later in this chapter, this reflexive manner of conducting an inquiry is not only understood to maximise the potential to reveal new information but, from a poststructuralist perspective, is considered to be essential to generating findings which acknowledge the role that method plays in not only revealing research outcomes (and realities) but also in producing them (Law & Urry, 2004). From this perspective therefore the separation of the three domains of research described above as entirely distinct is somewhat problematic, because they are understood to each play a role in producing each other. This problem is indirectly acknowledged in Wicker’s (1989) paper, where he cautions that the distinction he draws between the three domains is “oversimplified” and enjoins researchers to attend closely to the “dynamic interplay of conceptual frameworks, methods, and data” (p. 535). Thus the distinctions that Wicker (1989) makes between research domains can be seen as providing a useful format for reconsidering one’s approach to research, so long as the researcher maintains a reflexive awareness of their dynamic interplay. The ways in which I maintained such reflexivity throughout this research are discussed at the end of this chapter.

This inquiry was structured in a manner that is consistent with the first of Wicker’s (1989) scenarios (described above), where the substantive and methodological considerations were shaped by a conceptual concern with the fit and effects of the divergent and disjunctive ways in which illicit drug use is accounted for. The conceptual and substantive considerations outlined in detail in the introduction fit within Wicker’s (1989)

framework, with the substantive domain (i.e., the perspective of people who use illicit drugs) chosen according to its potential to generate new information about the conceptual mess of divergent and disjunctive accounts of illicit drug use. Importantly, as well as considering the conceptual value of exploring the perspective of people who use illicit drugs, this particular substantive domain was chosen on the basis of its social significance. Wicker (1989) identified psychology's tendency to choose substantive domains on the basis of convenience due to the priority given to methodological considerations as a key limitation of the discipline's capacity to contribute to social change. He thus called for researchers to engage in closer reflection when deciding upon the substantive area of inquiry, suggesting that where possible researchers should prioritise the social significance of the domain being explored over its amenability to methodological parameters. As detailed in the introduction, the decision to examine the perspective of people who use illicit drugs was underpinned by a concern with the significant social impact that accounts of illicit drug use have on the lives of such individuals. There exists therefore a strong political as well as conceptual rationale for selecting the perspective of these individuals as the domain in and through which to explore the utility and effects of divergent and disjunctive accounts of the conduct and subjects of illicit drug use.

In addition to the importance of reflecting on and where possible prioritising the issue of social significance when selecting a substantive domain, Wicker (1989) also discusses the importance of ensuring that the domain is explored in an in-depth way. He contends that in order to fully appreciate the subtleties and nuances of social phenomena or settings they need to be examined in sufficiently thorough and intimate ways; suggesting that in order to generate meaningful understandings of the intricate workings of any domain researchers should "gain a feeling for the domain" or develop "an intimacy with their domain" (Wicker, 1989, p. 539; see also Charmaz, 2004) This requires the researcher to:

be open to insights from a wide range of sources, including their intuitions as well as established and exploratory research strategies. They should sensitively interpret and analyse data, but they should also understand that analysing systematically collected data is not enough. Data *always* oversimplify and distort and sometimes enlighten. Researchers must continually look beyond what has been recorded in search of the dynamic, underlying processes that have produced the outcroppings they have captured (Wicker, 1989, p. 539, emphasis original).

Deconstructing Divergent Constructions of Illicit Drug Use

In placing emphasis on the value of gaining a rich, deep understanding of the nuances and complexities of a given social problem, Wicker (1989) thus encourages the use of methods which deepen the analysis to include aspects and interpretations of the substantive domain which are typically excluded or ignored in conventional psychological research. Examples of these aspects might include the unconscious workings of social processes or researcher intuition. Thus, as do Goffman (1989) and Charmaz (2004), Wicker (1989) also alerts us to the importance of seeing beyond the overt dimensions of the data by including that which is unspoken, inexplicit, or taken-for-granted into the analytic frame.

Further, Wicker (1989) cautions against the use of methods which decontextualise social and psychological phenomena, stressing the need to examine the substantive domain in relation to its contextual backdrop – a point that many contemporary critical researchers in the drug and alcohol continue to make due to the ongoing use of methodologically-driven research practices which exclude this backdrop from the inquiry (Bourgois, 1999, 2000; Duff, 2008; Fraser & Moore, 2011; valentine & Fraser, 2008; Rhodes, 2000; Rhodes & Moore, 2001). Coming from the standpoint of ecological psychology, which contends that the complexity of reality cannot be broken down by separating the social and psychological phenomena under inquiry from its context, Wicker (1989) emphasises the importance of bringing context into the inquiry. He thus encourages the adoption of a contextualist position (see Payne, 1996; Pepper, 1942), which reflects and produces the assumption that human acts or events are active, dynamic and ongoing in nature and are situated in a reality that is continuously changing and thus that such acts or events *cannot* be meaningfully separated from their context (Jaeger & Rosnow, 1988). Consistent with Wicker's (1989) suggestions, the aim in conducting contextual psychological research is to include, rather than control for, the context of any act or event into its analysis through the use of mixed-methods and multiple levels of analysis.

The methods for exploring the fit and effects of the mess of divergent and disjunctive accounts of illicit drug use were thus chosen according to their capacity to a) generate new information about this mess, b) facilitate sufficiently in-depth analyses of what people who use illicit drugs make of this mess, and c) enable exploration of the context in which the perspective of people who use illicit drugs is formed. The result was the adoption of a mixed-methods approach, involving the use of contextual analysis, intensive interviewing, and in-depth deconstructive analysis. These methods are outlined below.

2.3.2 Contextual analysis

Contextual inquiry is based on the assumption that the nature, meaning, and reality of any phenomenon or event is not fixed but is determined by the contexts in which it occurs (Payne, 1996). This means that in order to develop an understanding of an event additional information about the social, cultural, political and historical context in which it occurs is required (Jaeger & Rosnow, 1988). Morrow (2005) asserts that this incorporation of contextual data is of particular importance when conducting psychological inquiries, as “there is some danger in psychological research of focusing on intrapsychic and interpersonal variables to the exclusion of context” (p. 253; see also Moore, 2002). She proposes therefore that the examination of such data provides the opportunity to recontextualise the forms of data that are often the focus of psychological research, such as interview data.

Contextual analysis is also commensurate with poststructuralist inquiry, which reflects and produces the assumption that we cannot separate events from contexts (Law, 2004). As Fraser and Moore (2011) explain, context (i.e., cultural, discursive, scientific, material, social practices) does not just surround the ideas, activities, objects, subjects, and experiences of addiction which we aim to examine but produces them:

The phenomenon of addiction—that is the idea of addiction as well as the activities and objects associated with addiction, and the state of addiction itself—are produced through social and cultural practices, such as medical procedures, policing practices, media texts and the way we talk about addiction in everyday life (p. 7).

Thus, because context is seen as not just shaping the phenomena and subjects of illicit drug use and how we understand them but rather as making them real and knowable through the particular knowledge practices and cultural structures that make up a given context, meaningful exploration of addiction or illicit drug use requires methods which make it possible for context to be included into the analysis.

Consequently, the initial phase of this research involved a contextual analysis of the ways in which a selection of Australia news-media texts construct the acts and subjects of illicit drug use. This involved analysis of a) articles selected from local (West Australian) and national newspapers and b) comments posted on online discussion forums hosted by local and national news media websites. The texts were analysed using the principles of Foucauldian discourse analysis (Burr, 2003; Martin & Stenner, 2004). A detailed description

of the data selection and analysis is provided in chapter three. Consistent with the constructionist epistemological framework, the this contextual inquiry was not intended to generate a representational picture of how illicit drug use is constructed in the broader context of Australian culture, but rather to generate hypotheses about how the social, cultural, and knowledge practices that operate at a broader cultural level effect how we talk about and respond to the acts and subjects of illicit drug use. In doing so, I aimed to explore if these cultural, social, political, discursive practices privilege particular competing and divergent and disjunctive accounts of illicit drug use. The hypotheses generated through this analysis of news-media texts were used to contextualise the data generated in interviews with people who use illicit drugs; providing an understanding of the context in which participants formed and appraised accounts of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects. The primary motive for pairing this contextual analysis with the intensive interviews (outlined below) was thus to enrich and deepen the exploration of the substantive domain. It was for this reason that the more in-depth analytic framework through which the interview data was analysed (see chapter four) was not used when analysing the news-media texts, as a discursive analysis was considered sufficient for these kinds of hypotheses to emerge. Critically however, as is discussed at the end of this chapter, the addition of this contextual inquiry also contributed to the robustness of the research's overall outcomes. This contextual analysis and its findings are documented in chapter three.

2.3.3 Intensive interviews

The second and primary phase of the research involved qualitative interviews, conducted with one or two participants at a time. Specific details regarding the selection of participants, the process of data collection, interviewee demographics, and ethical considerations are discussed in chapter four. In this section I outline the methodological design of these interviews and briefly introduce the methodology that was used to analyse the interview data.

When selecting an interview methodology emphasis was placed upon the potential to generate rich, personal, and in-depth understandings of how people who use illicit drugs experience the divergent and disjunctive ways in which their conduct and subjectivity are constructed. Alongside the importance of conducting an in-depth and intimate examination of the substantive domain (Charmaz, 2004; Wicker, 1989), a key consideration concerned the capacity for the interview approach to maximise on the potential to privilege the voice of participants. In the pilot interview a standard semi-structured interviewing approach

(DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Smith & Osborn, 2003) was initially adopted. As I conducted this initial interview however I found that more responsive, mutually reflective, and emotion-focused interviewing practices were instrumental in facilitating deeper and more personal explorations of the different ways in which the participant appraised dominant cultural constructions of her illicit drug use and her subjectivity. In keeping with the priority given to substantive and political concerns, therefore, the broad methodology of semi-structured interviewing was discarded in favour of an intensive interviewing methodology (Charmaz, 2004).

Compared to more traditional structured or semi-structured formats, an intensive interviewing approach pursues broad, open-ended questions that are guided by a set of thematic prompts to create a conversational format of interaction (Charmaz, 2004). However, despite being conversational in tone, the style of an intensive interview differs from that of conventional conversations in that it “follows a different etiquette” which “goes beneath the surface of ordinary conversation” (Charmaz, 2004, p. 36). Indeed, Charmaz draws numerous distinctions between the conventions of a traditional interview style and that of intensive interviews (outlined in Table 1). By asking participants to elaborate on meanings, and requesting clarification of the statements that they make, the intensive interview facilitates deeper reflections and produces a more reflexive, in-depth inquiry. As Dzidic (2009) describes:

Significant to the character of intensive interviews is the type of interaction that is facilitated by the interviewer. As opposed to more traditional interview styles whereby verbal (e.g., ‘yes I see’) or non-verbal (e.g., nodding) communication from the interviewer implies an understanding of the topic being discussed, in the intensive interview the interviewer encourages deeper exploration of their utterances... [This provides] the opportunity for the participant themselves to best convey or correct how they articulate their perceptions, feelings or expressions (p. 69).

This process of deepening what is examined in the interview to include more than just the most immediate and explicit reflections of participants made an intensive interviewing approach ideally suited to the aim of exploring what participants made of the mess of divergent and disjunctive accounts of illicit drug use in sufficient depth.

Table 1. Comparison of conventional interviews to intensive interviews (taken from Dzidic, 2009, p. 71).

Conventions of conventional conversational interviews	Conventions of the intensive interview
Interpret what is uttered by the participant	Enquire more deeply to learn more from what is uttered from the participant
Wait for a natural pause or break in the conversation	Stop conversation mid flow to explore particular aspects of interest and propensity to change the impact of the interview
Validation generally does not occur at the time of the interview	Ask for more detail or explanation and explore the participants responses during the interview as validation
Generally a reluctance to explore further based on fears of intrusion	Enquire about feelings and emotions that surround the topic of conversation
Tendency to keep to the structure of the interview survey or guide	Refer back to previous utterances in the conversation
Tendency to commit to the questions of the interview survey or guide	Change the topic of discussion in response to the conversation
Tendency to remain emotionally removed from the interview and interviewee	Emotionally invest in the interview through validation of the interviewees endeavours (e.g., humanity, achievement, effort)
Tendency for the interview survey or guide to be strictly adhered to	Observation used to shape the content and direction of the interview
Respect the participant and express gratitude	Respect the participant and express gratitude

The attention to emotion that the adoption of an intensive interviewing approach facilitates was also pivotal in the decision to use this method. The potential in an intensive interview to validate participants' understandings, knowledges, and experiences through expressing an interest in their feelings and through the provision of genuine positive regard made this style of interviewing particularly suited to the pursuit of two key research objectives: a) privileging the voice of people who use illicit drugs and b) fostering empathy in and through research into illicit drug use. For people who are typically subject to the invalidating and dehumanising effects of epistemic insults (see chapter one) the capacity for the interviewer to demonstrate emotional validation and investment throughout the interviews was seen as a critical ingredient distinguishing the suitability of this approach from more conventional methods of interviewing. In other words, there were strong substantively-driven and political motives to engage in the kind of interview practice which allows participants to:

- Break silences and express their views
- *Tell their stories and to give them a coherent frame*
- Reflect on earlier events

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- *Be experts*
- Choose what to tell and how to tell it
- *Share significant experiences and teach the interviewer how to interpret them*
- *Express thoughts and feelings disallowed in other relationships and settings*
- Receive affirmation and understanding (Charmaz, 2006, p. 27, emphasis added).

Clearly, ensuring that the participants were approached as valued, knowledgeable, and credible individuals was considered particularly important. Indeed, the way that they “validate your participant’s humanity” (Charmaz, 2004, p. 981) points to such interviewing practices as a device through which researchers can actively work against the dehumanising effects of many accounts of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects. Such interviewing practices also open up opportunities for the expression and exploration of issues, thoughts, and feelings that may often be subjugated, or simply left unattended in other relationships and settings (including in less intensive interviews). Thus in addition to enabling the political objectives that underpinned the research to be met, an intensive interviewing approach was also chosen on the basis of its potential to maximise opportunities to generate new information about the fit and effects of the mess of divergent and disjunctive accounts of illicit drug use. By attending to these less overt aspects of what is communicated in interviews, the intensive interviewing method has the potential to generate information that not only has greater depth but which is also more intimate. Indeed, Charmaz (2004) contends that an intensive interviewing approach allows the interviewer to “enter the phenomenon” to a greater extent than in a traditional interview interaction, as it insists on the interviewer “being fully present during the interview and deep inside the content afterward... [and] com[ing] to sense, feel, and fathom what having this experience is like” (p. 981). Such an approach to interviewing was thus consistent with Wicker’s (1989) call for researchers to develop “an intimacy” with the substantive domain (p. 539).

2.3.3.1 In-depth deconstructive analysis: A layered approach

Due to the importance placed upon generating sufficiently in-depth understandings of what participants made of the mess of divergent and disjunctive accounts of their conduct and their subjectivities, the decision was made to adopt a different analytic method to that which was adopted in the contextual analysis, as a straight-forward discourse analytic approach was considered too limited in depth. Instead, I opted to use different deconstructive methodology as an analytic framework. Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) (Inayatullah, 1998; 2004) is a methodology designed to analyse a problem from

different vantage points. It is based on the premise that because the different ways of knowing about a problem or phenomenon are understood to result in different constructions of that problem or phenomenon, an in-depth deconstruction of such problems of phenomena requires examination of each of these differing constructions. The advantage of CLA, therefore, is that it enables the researcher to draw together multiple methods of deconstruction, rather than limiting their analytic gaze to one particular level of construction (Dzidic, 2009; Bishop, Dzidic & Breen, 2013). As Bishop and colleagues (2013) describe, “using CLA ensures that researchers examine not only what has happened and the social context in which it occurred, but it allows examination of the worldviews of participants and the underlying aspects of culture” (p. 6). CLA thus constitutes an analytic framework through which researchers can thoroughly and deeply examine the substantive domain. Importantly, the way that multiple ways of knowing about an issue or substantive domain are brought into the analytic frame through the use of CLA was considered of particular value in relation to the research objectives outlined previously; by providing a framework for including different ways of seeing the mess of divergent and disjunctive accounts the use of analytic approach ensured that I was able to examine numerous aspects of what participants had to say in my analysis, including those aspects that were less explicit. Detailed information about this methodology, its levels of analysis and its application are outlined in chapter four. The findings from this analysis of the intensive interview data are presented in chapters five, six, and seven. In chapter eight I discuss my reflections on the findings that emerged from the analyses of the news-media texts and the interview data to establish a set of questions about how we might overcome the shortcomings in how the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are understood and approached.

2.4 Evaluating research quality

Given the disparities between what positivist and constructionist positions assume to be the outcomes of research (i.e., the uncovering of objective facts and truth claims over the emergence of historically/culturally specific and provisional/contestable knowledges), it becomes necessary for researchers who adopt a constructionist alternative epistemology and methodology to reconceptualise the criteria of reliability and validity which are typically used to assess the quality of positivist research (Burr, 2003; Gergen, 1999; Koch & Harrington, 1998). Reflecting the variety of approaches which fall under the umbrella of qualitative inquiry, there are a variety of different schools of thought regarding how to appropriately appraise qualitative research (e.g., see Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985;

Mays & Pope, 2000; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Wood & Kroger, 2000). In discussing the quality of this research, I refer to the commonly used concept of trustworthiness as proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness primarily refers to the extent to which “an inquirer [can] persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of” (p. 290). Table two summarises the four criteria through which they suggest such worth can be evaluated. In keeping with its epistemological and methodological underpinnings, this research was designed with three of these criteria—credibility, transferability, and confirmability—in mind as way of ensuring the quality of the research process and outcomes. The criterion of dependability—which relies on the assumption of universality and assesses the extent to which findings can be reproduced—was not considered pertinent, as a social constructionist epistemological stance is not consistent with the aim of generalisability. The means through which the credibility, transferability, and conformability of this research can be assessed and demonstrated are outlined below.

Table 2. Comparison of positivist and alternative assessment terms

Positivist Terms	Alternative Terms
Internal Validity	Credibility (<i>Does the research produce sound, credible outcomes?</i>)
External Validity	Transferability (<i>Do the findings have applicability in other contexts?</i>)
Reliability	Dependability (<i>Can the findings be repeated?</i>)
Objectivity	Confirmability (<i>Do the findings have relative neutrality? Are they free from unacknowledged researcher bias and explicit about inevitable bias?</i>)

2.4.1 Credibility

The following methods were used to ensure that the findings which emerged from both parts of this research were sufficiently sound and credible.

2.4.1.1 Triangulation

Triangulation is a practice designed to ensure that the researcher can adequately explain that which they set out to examine. It refers to those practices which facilitate the research question(s) to be examined from various vantage points to ensure that the findings are rich and deep enough to produce adequate understandings (Barbour, 2001; Charmaz, 2004). The accuracy of the understandings formed is thus understood to be determined through the process of collecting enough data so that the phenomenon can

sufficiently be observed from as many angles as possible. Thus, numerous researchers have emphasised that the goal of triangulation is not to achieve convergence in the findings, but rather to generate “fullness” (Charmaz, 2004), “completeness” (Madhill, 2000) or “comprehensiveness” (Mays & Pope, 2000). I pursued such comprehensiveness through the triangulation of a) methods (contextual analysis and intensive interviews), b) sources (analysing diverse and contrasting accounts of illicit drugs), and c) the use of a layered approach to analysing the interview data (see chapter four).

2.4.1.2 Member checks

Member-checking refers to the practice of testing the appropriateness of emerging themes and interpretations by seeking feedback from the members of the group being researched (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This provides opportunities for participants to correct errors in the data and interpretations, to volunteer additional information, and to confirm preliminary findings (Lincoln & Guba). In this research, this involved a) informally clarifying and confirming with participants themes and interpretations that emerged as the interview took place and b) formally questioning subsequent participants about emerging themes from previous interviews.

2.4.1.3 Negative case analysis

Negative or deviant case analysis involves actively searching for, examining, and discussing elements of the data that are inconsistent with emerging themes and interpretations (Creswell, 2013). I undertook the task of interviewing a range of different people who use a range of different illicit drugs, in a range of different ways to facilitate this process of searching for instances of inconsistency. The instances of contradiction or inconsistency (both between participant accounts and within them) that emerged were actively probed and analysed further as a way of revising, broadening, and confirming emerging patterns. The discussion of emerging themes in subsequent interviews with new participants was found to provide particularly fruitful opportunities for the identification of such inconsistencies.

2.4.1.4 Peer debriefing and supervision

Throughout the research, I engaged in detailed discussion with both peers and supervisors in order to facilitate what Dzidic (2009) refers to as “collective deconstruction of data” (p. 65). Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe such debriefing as “a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling analytical sessions and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind” (p. 308). Notably, as the analyses progressed, these conversations also

helped to reorient my attention to themes which had begun to be taken for granted, or seen as obvious or unremarkable, as a result of my deep immersion in the data.

2.4.2 Transferability

The primary strategy through which I endeavoured to ensure that readers could assess the applicability of my findings in other contexts was through the inclusion of detailed, thick description throughout this document. As Charmaz (2004) clarifies, satisfying this criterion is not as simple as providing a large number of excerpts, but means taking “a measured stance about the data we select to show. It means choosing excerpts and anecdotes that *represent* larger issues, not just choosing the juiciest stories” (p. 986, emphasis original). The process of selecting descriptions to include was guided by this principle.

2.4.3 Confirmability

There were two key practices through which I attempted to meet the criterion of confirmability or relative neutrality: a) the use of a reflexive journal, and b) detailed reporting of my positioning and its role in the production of the research findings. These practices, the rationale behind them, and their purpose are best explained by discussing the concept of reflexivity.

2.4.3.1 Reflexivity

As Rhodes (2000) emphasises, qualitative researchers do not purport to be “immune” to the process by which methods contribute to the construction of those phenomena, subjects, and problems that they examine, “but they aim to be reflexive about the process of interpretation, and do not blindly purport to capture objectivity” (p. 28). In other words, in actively rejecting the possibility of objectivity qualitative researchers place importance on acknowledging, or even emphasising and excavating, how who they are (and are not), what they think (and ignore), and the methods they use (and do not use) influence the research outcomes. The practice through which such influences are acknowledged, emphasised, and excavated is typically referred to as reflexivity, which can be described as “an ongoing self-awareness during the research process which aids in making visible the practice and construction of knowledge within research in order to produce more accurate analyses of our research” (Pillow, 2003, p. 178). The following two extracts provide an introduction to the concept of reflexivity and its role in determining research quality:

No human being can step outside of their humanity and view the world from no position at all, which is what the idea of objectivity suggests, and this is just as true

of scientists as of everyone else. The task of the researcher therefore becomes to acknowledge and even to work with their own intrinsic involvement in the research process and the part that this plays in the results that are produced. The researcher must view the research as necessarily a co-production between themselves and the people they are researching (Burr, 2003, p. 152).

The unsuitability of traditional methods of validity requires qualitative researchers to establish alternative practices through which the 'accuracy' of their data and analyses can be discussed and determined. It is for this reason that the practice of reflexivity becomes important, as it provides the opportunity for researchers to demonstrate an awareness of the research problematics and can thus be used to potentially validate and legitimise the research precisely by raising questions about the research process (Pillow, 2003). By practicing such self-awareness and visibility or transparency throughout this inquiry I hoped "to produce research that questions its own interpretations and is reflexive about its own knowledge production" in the interest "of producing better, less distorted research accounts" (Pillow, 2003, p. 178).

One of the two primary steps taken to facilitate such reflexivity throughout this research was the use of a reflexive journal (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A reflexive journal:

is a type of diary where a researcher makes regular entries during the research process. In these entries, the researcher records methodological decisions and the reasons for them, the logistics of the study, and reflection upon what is happening in terms of one's own values and interests (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006, Steps to foster reflexivity and reflexive research design, para. 3).

Keeping a reflexive journal meant that I remained cognisant of the role my own positioning played in the development of research questions, the selection of methodologies, in the process of data collection, analysis, and in the presentation of the research findings. These records have enabled me to provide accounts throughout this document of my own preconceptions, beliefs, and epistemological positioning, which constitutes the second element of reflexive practice. Koch and Harrington (1998) argue that:

if the research product is well signposted, the readers will be able to travel easily through the worlds of the participants and makers of the text (the researchers) and decide for themselves whether the text is believable or plausible (our terms for rigour) (p. 882).

I have thus attempted to construct this document with adequate signposting of my own as well as participants' positioning in the interest of providing readers with the information necessary to form conclusions about the believability, plausibility, or trustworthiness of my findings.

Importantly, Spivak (1988) points out that "making positions transparent does not make them unproblematic" (p. 6, cited in Pillow, 2003, p.183). Thus in engaging in such reflexivity I do not portend to have made entirely unproblematic the influences that my positioning has had in shaping the research and its outcomes. Further, I do not contend that I have been able to fully or completely account for my positioning. This is consistent with a poststructuralist standpoint, where the process of construction is always incomplete, meaning that firm assertions of positioning and therefore firm conclusions about its effects cannot be made. Consequently, the type of reflexivity engaged in throughout this research is consistent with what Pillow describes as "uncomfortable reflexivity – a reflexivity that seeks to know while at the same time situates this knowing as tenuous" (p. 188). This tenuousness of knowing is something that Wicker (1989) similarly acknowledges in his discussion about the extent to which efforts to comprehend phenomena can only ever produce partial understandings. He stresses the need for researcher to accept the "substantial amounts of indeterminacy" that necessarily remain at the conclusion of an inquiry and thus to appreciate the open-endedness of all research endeavours (Wicker, 1989, p. 545). Rather than aiming to establish firm conclusions about my positioning and its effects on the research outcomes, therefore, the ultimate aim of my reflexive practices have been to bring my "deep investments to full view and thus allow readers to enter dialogue with them" (Agger, 1991, p. 120).

Chapter Three

3. Contextual Analysis: Exploring Cultural Constructions

At the beginning of this chapter I provide an overview of the design of the contextual analysis, outlining the objectives, data selection and analytic approach. The bulk of the chapter contains description and discussion of the findings from the analysis of the news-media texts. The findings are presented according to the two broad sets of constructions that emerged as the most prominent ways in which the acts and subjects of illicit drug use were constructed throughout these texts. In describing and providing examples of these constructions I also discuss the effects they have in terms of positioning. Critically, what stood out in this analysis was the way that both sets of constructions operated to construct the acts and subjects of illicit drug use as markedly other.

3.1 Objectives

The aim in conducting a contextual analysis was to explore the kinds of constructions that occur at a cultural level in Australia by examining the ways that illicit drug use and drug-using subjects were constructed in a selection of national Australian and local West Australian news-media texts (newspaper articles and online discussion forums). Importantly therefore, my aim in conducting this inquiry was not to generate a representational picture of how illicit drug use is constructed in Australia. As Acevedo (2007) explains of her Foucauldian discourse analysis of media texts, because “media messages represent what is said in a particular moment, expressing social concerns, and adding to the configuration” of an issue, the analysis of such messages does not concern questions about the generalisability, nor “the veracity of those discourses, nor whether they make sense; instead, the interest lies in determining how these discourses actually create, define or construct the problem” (p. 180). It was this same interest—in exploring the discourses which produce the acts and subjects of illicit drug use—which underpinned my Foucauldian discourses analysis of news-media texts.

In addition to generating an understanding of the way that the acts and subjects of illicit drug use were constructed in these texts, I thus aimed to examine in my analysis if particular constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects were privileged over others in these texts and to explore the different effects of differing accounts. Importantly therefore my overall aim in conducting this exploratory, discursive inquiry was to provide some contextual backdrop against which the data generated in interviews with people who use illicit drugs could be understood. It was anticipated that examining through discourse analysis the kinds of constructions that occurred and were privileged in these texts, and the

effects of these constructions, would a) enable the interview data to be understood in relation to the context in which it was produced, and b) make it possible to draw some comparisons and contrasts between the constructions produced in these cultural texts and those produced in what the participants had to say.

3.2 Methods

The methodology adopted to examine the constructions occurring in the news-media texts was that of discourse analysis. There are multiple methodologies that fall under the umbrella term discourse analysis (Burr, 2003; Martin & Stenner, 2004). The approach used here derives from the Foucauldian tradition, with the aim being to “critically ‘deconstruct’ prevailing discourses, in order to say something about how power/knowledge operates in relation to drug use in contemporary society” (Martin & Stenner, p. 399). This particular methodological approach was also selected for the emphasis it places on the extent to which acts of representation, or discourses, are shaped by “personal or institutional *stake or interest*” (Potter, Edwards, & Wetherell, 1993, p. 392, emphasis original), as this emphasis was considered important given the objective of exploring the effects of those constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects that emerged as most dominant in the news-media texts.

A Foucauldian discursive approach was also selected due to the importance it places on attending to the subject positions that are formed through the production of particular formations of knowledge/power. Extending on earlier discussions about subjectivity, positioning refers to the “process by which our identities and ourselves as persons come to be produced by socially and culturally available discourses” (Burr, 2003, p. 140). Implicit within each discourse is a range of subject positions, each accompanied by a different set of possibilities and limitations on what a person can or cannot do. These positions thus are understood to produce our subjective experiences:

Once we take up a position within a discourse we then invariably come to experience the world and ourselves from the vantage point of that perspective. Our sense of who we are and what is therefore possible and not possible for us to do, what is right and appropriate for us to do, and what is wrong and inappropriate for us to do thus all derive from our occupation of subject positions within discourse (Burr, 2003, p. 146).

Examining the subject positions made available within particular texts thus facilitates reflection upon not just the content of what is produced through discourse, but on the

functions or effects of these productions. Such analyses can make visible the ways in which certain forms of conduct, individual attributes, or socio-demographics can make particular, valued and normative, subjectivities unavailable and thus can consign certain people to positions that are stigmatising and marginalising. The analysis of subject positions thus provides the opportunity to examine the political effects of how individuals are signified and differentiated through the discourses. This methodological approach was thus considered ideally suited to the objectives that underpinned this contextual inquiry. Below is an outline of the specific data collection and analysis methods that were adopted.

3.2.1 Data selection

The data selection occurred in two phases and was guided by the principle of purposive sampling. This process of selecting data according to the objectives of the research is considered central to determining the power of qualitative research (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Given the objective of exploring a variety of constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects that occur at a cultural level in Australia, it was considered important to sample a wide range of instances of such constructions. For this reason, I selected a local Western Australian newspaper (*The West Australian*) and a national Australian newspaper (*The Australian*) from which to collect data. As I explain in more detail below, it was also for this reason that the decision was made to include additional data collected from local (*perthnow.com.au* and *thewest.com.au*) and national (*news.com.au* and *abc.net.au*) news-media discussion forums. The overall approach to data selection was thus also guided by the rationale of triangulation; as it aimed to generate data that would have sufficient fullness (Charmaz, 2004) for the development of comprehensive, and therefore adequate, understandings (Barbour, 2001; Mays & Pope, 2000).

In selecting data according to these principles of purposive sampling and triangulation, the data set came to comprise two very different types of news-media texts. Clearly, there are significant differences between the language and devices used to construct illicit drug use and drug-using subjects in formal newspaper articles and those used in informal comments made on online discussion forums. It is important to note, therefore, that although these differing texts were analysed together, they constitute very different social practices—one that is formal and ostensibly objective, and another that is informal and provocative—through which the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are produced. Critically however, the aim of conducting this textual analysis was to generate a broad snapshot of the dominant discourses present in Australia in order to situate the

interview data, rather generate a comprehensive deconstruction of these various constructions. That said, had the emergent findings pointed to the importance of drawing out the distinctions between the different ways that these newspaper articles and online discussion texts construct illicit drug use and drug-using subjects, these distinctions would have been presented below. Interestingly, as is shown throughout this chapter, what instead stood out in the analysis was the extent to which similar discourses operated in both instances of language as social practice. Thus, in showing the similar discourses and social meanings that emerged in both the newspaper articles and online comments, the findings provide a compelling example of how the acts and subjects of illicit drug use can be constructed in certain, deeply stigmatising and marginalising ways even in/through differing social practices.

3.2.1.1 Newspaper articles

Newspaper data was collected in May 2006 through the use of Factiva to search for articles published in *The West Australian* and *The Australian*. In the interest of generating a wide range of constructions, the key words illicit drug, addiction, ecstasy, cannabis, marijuana, heroin, cocaine, amphetamine, and meth were used to search for articles. As the aim was to analyse constructions of the acts and subjects of illicit drug use emerging in the 12 months prior to the planned commencement of interview data collection (i.e., to analyse the constructions occurring in the cultural context in which the interview data was to be collected), the search was limited to articles published between April 2005 and April 2006.

A total of 1080 articles were returned from a search of *The West Australian*, and 1496 articles from *The Australian*. Keeping articles from both publications separate, I collated the articles according to key word (with articles on containing the words amphetamine and/or meth combined into one category). Due to the large number of articles returned I then selected a random sample of 20 articles from each category (10 from each publication) to analyse. As it was clear at the completion of this preliminary analysis that no new discursive themes were emerging, this selection of 160 articles was considered to be sufficient.

3.2.1.2 Online news discussion forums

Consistent with the “adapt as you go along” ethos of qualitative research, which encourages researchers to respond flexibly to the constraints and opportunities that

emerge throughout the course of a project (Patton, 2000, p. 1363; see also Rhodes & Moore, 2001), the decision to analyse online discussion forums in addition to the newspaper articles was made during the collection and analysis of the interview data. The precipitant for the inclusion of this additional data was an incident in February 2009 involving the ecstasy-related death of a 17 year old woman at the Big Day Out (a large music festival held annually around Australia) in Perth, Western Australia. Attracting widespread media coverage, this incident ignited considerable debate about the issue of illicit drug use. A key medium through which this debate took place were comment boards on local and national news websites – *perthnow.com.au*, *thewest.com.au*, *news.com.au*, and *abc.net.au*.

The young woman's death was produced in media reports as having been contributed to by the use of police surveillance dogs at the entry to the concert, as her friends reported that the presence of these dogs prompted her to swallow at once all three of the ecstasy tablets she had in her possession upon arriving at the event (Pritchard, 2009). The discussion forums analysed were thus framed by questions posed by news-media about the factors that precipitated her death. Although the data collected from these forums primarily addressed the key issues surrounding this event (i.e., the structural, social, environmental and individual factors that contributed to the young woman's death), broader issues relating to illicit drug use were also present in the data (e.g., local and national illicit drug policy, treatment provision, cultural attitudes). Importantly however, the fact that the above event operated as the focal point for these discussions meant that there was a greater presence of accounts of individual autonomy and responsibility in these texts compared to the newspaper texts. Critically therefore, this meant that the acts and subjects of illicit drug use were accounted for in these online texts according to a particularly complex and contradictory mix of both contemporary (e.g., individual autonomy and responsibility) and more traditional (e.g., pathology) discourses. The decision to incorporate these online texts as additional contextual data was thus consistent with the rationale of purposive data selection (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). The inclusion of this online data broadened the scope of the inquiry by providing greater opportunity to explore the formation, effects, and interrelationship of competing and divergent constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects.

The addition of online media data was also believed to improve the scope of the inquiry by enabling the exploration of accounts of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects in a social and cultural context that is interactive, informal, and stimulates the expression of

“views that would not be so readily stated in other media or in face-to-face interviews” (Katainen, 2006, p. 297). In particular, the anonymity of such mediums is believed to enhance the potential to capture material that is less tempered by the etiquettes of social acceptability and political correctness (Glaser, Dixit, & Green, 2002; Katainen, 2006). Consequently, qualitative researchers are increasingly drawing on this medium of communication as a valuable source of data in AOD research. Katainen (2006), for example, explored the ways in which people who smoke tobacco justify their behaviour through analysis of web-based discussions, which produced rich and diverse accounts. Additionally, Sikou, Moore, and Lee (2010) incorporated YouTube videos and the comments from an online discussion forum hosted by an Australian dance music website into their analysis of terminologies used by ‘ravers’ in Melbourne, Australia as a way of situating their analysis of observational and interview data in a wider cultural context.

Constituting accessible cultural sites in which a wide range of opinions, attitudes, and values about the use of illicit drugs and about people who use illicit drugs are expressed, the inclusion of the online texts thus provided a unique opportunity to examine the divergent and competing ways in which such conduct and subjects are produced in everyday talk. However, it is important to briefly discuss the issue of trustworthiness in relation to this data. As mentioned, the anonymity of online communications makes it possible for people to express views and opinions that they may feel unable or unwilling to do so in less anonymous contexts. Although this can facilitate greater openness and diversity in what is said, it also provides recourse for people to interact in ways that are intentionally contrived and therefore not an ‘accurate’ reflection of their views. The phenomena of ‘trolling’, where people deliberately post inflammatory comments that are intended to incite conflict and controversy (Herring, Job-Sluder, Scheckler, & Barab, 2002), is an example of this. From a traditional research standpoint, this issue would be seen as posing a challenge to the validity of the data and findings, given the impossibility of determining which accounts are ‘accurate’ and those which are not. As discussed in chapter two, however, from a poststructuralist epistemological stance such notions of truth and objectivity are considered problematic; instead, researchers coming from this stance are concerned with how differing truths and realities are produced. In analysing these texts from such a standpoint, the intent behind the ways in which illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are accounted for was not considered consequential to the formation of credible hypotheses about what versions of such conduct and subjects are made thinkable and real in Australian culture, and to the examination of the effects of such accounts. In other

words, even if the intent of particular remarks were made with the intention of inciting debate and controversy, I considered such remarks to still be reflective and productive of the kinds of discursive practices that are available to construct the acts and subject of illicit drug use and thus saw such remarks as data that was relevant to the objectives of this initial inquiry.

3.2.2 Analysis

As discussed above, the emphasis of Foucauldian discourse analysis is twofold – tracing both the *construction* and the *function* of discourses (i.e., questioning how they have been assembled and the effects they have) (Martin & Stenner, 2004). Following the steps outlined by Martin and Stenner (2004), therefore, my analysis of the news-media texts involved close reading of the texts and coding the themes that emerged based on the following questions:

- What versions of illicit drug using conduct and subjectivity does the text make available?
- What power relations do these constructions of illicit drug use and of drug-using subjects bring into effect?
- What are the effects of these power relations?
- Are particular interests are being privileged? Are others being subverted?

The process of analysis thus involved rigorous engagement with the texts to generate themes or codes according to these deconstructive questions, which continued until no new themes emerged.

Importantly, analysis of the texts and interpretation of the discursive themes occurred alongside the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the interview data. This enabled me to iteratively engage with both sets of data to look for both confirming and disconfirming instances of themes as they developed incrementally. I believe that the depth of the overall interpretations, as presented in chapter eight, is an outcome of adopting this iterative-generative-reflexive research practice (Bishop et al., 2002), as it was by constantly going between the two sets of data and emergent findings which made the commonalities between the substantive and conceptual domains visible. Had either of these domains been privileged over the other, such linkages were likely to have remained unrecognised (Bishop et al., 2002; Wicker, 1989) and therefore important questions about the deeper cultural processes underpinning the shortcomings in how illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are understood and approached may not have emerged.

3.3 Findings

The themes that emerged from the analysis of both newspaper and online comment texts made it clear that the acts and subjects of illicit drug use were most commonly constructed in terms of otherness. Indeed, most often throughout these texts such individuals and behaviours were constructed as somehow deviant and disorder. Most often, therefore, the constructions that were privileged throughout the texts had the effect of positioning the acts and subjects of illicit drug use in deeply stigmatising and marginalising ways. Different discourses emerged in the online comment texts, where the acts and subjects of illicit drug use were also shown to be constructed in terms of individual choice and responsibility. Crucially however, in contrast to the way that these discourses are often used by researchers, advocates and people who use illicit drugs to contest charges of deviance and disorder (see chapter one), in the texts analysed these discourses had the effect of providing an additional recourse through which the drug-using subject can be constructed as other to cultural norms and values. The two overarching themes that emerged from the discursive analysis of the news-media texts thus not only highlighted the range of ways in which the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are constructed as other (and hence the variety of discourses that operate to produce stigma and marginalisation for such individuals), but also generated critical questions about the potential effects of the discourses of neoliberal subjectivity.

3.3.1 Deviance and disorder: Abject others

The most prominent theme that emerged from the analysis of the new-media texts echoes concerns that have been long expressed in social research regarding the extent to which the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are constructed as other in marked and absolute ways (e.g., Keane, 1999; Lindesmith, 1940; O'Malley & Mugford, 1991; Room, 2003). Evidently, what dominated the data were constructions of illicit drug use which charged such acts and subjects with marked and absolute deviance and disorder – constructions of flawed morals and psychological functioning, of deceit and untrustworthiness, and of inevitable harm and danger. It was thus also clear that the primary effect of these pervasive and intersecting constructions of marked otherness was the routine and pronounced stigmatisation and marginalisation of individuals who use illicit drugs. Indeed, the combined effect of constructions of deviance and disorder in the texts analysed was the positioning of such individuals as entirely and inevitably abject.

3.3.1.1 Not in their “right mind”: Irrational, compulsive, and weak subjects

Liberal constructions of illicit drug use have predominantly constructed such conduct as either stemming from or causing individual dysfunction – be it moral corruption or psychobiological disorder/disease (May, 2001; Reinerman, 2005; Reith, 2004; Room, 2003; Truan, 1993; Valverde, 1998). Such constructions emerged frequently throughout the texts analysed; positioning drug-using subjects as irrational and incompetent:

I do know that legalisation would stop a lot of the self-destructive behaviour that is associated with being an addict (stealing to get the money etc.). Making this illegal just gives the bullies of the world (drug kingpins, human traffickers) that much more scope to abuse the people least able to look after themselves [discussion post] (Bsquared, 2009).

Despite espousing progressive values regarding drug law reform, this comment reflects and produces archetypal constructions of the drug-using subject or “addict”, which produce them as engaging in irrational, harmful behaviour and incapable of looking after themselves. And such charges of debilitation or incapacitation often occurred through constructions of drug-using subjects as so utterly “hooked” (Eiser & Gossop, 1979, p. 188), “enslaved” (Reith, 2004, p. 288) or “desperate” (Elliot & Chapman, 2001, p. 199) that they will do anything to get ‘high’:

I don't think that she panicked because she saw the Police, I think she panicked because she thought her ‘high’ for the day was going to be taken from her, and there was no way she was going to allow that to happen, so she decided to take an un-educated chance and swallow the lot to get an instant high, which unfortunately had tragic circumstances. She could of also dropped these illegal drugs on the ground, and crushed them, but she probably thought of the money she spent on her ‘high’ for the day. Some people are saying that she was not a drug addict. I believe she was a drug addict in the making [discussion post] (IA, 2009).

Such constructions of the drug-using subject as “caring too much about the wrong things and not enough about the right things” and therefore as conducting themselves in a manner that is “the virtual opposite of the rational, productive and self-reliant citizen” (Keane, 2004, p. 193) occurred frequently throughout the texts. And importantly, as Brook and Stringer (2005) note, in imputing that they are incapable of acting rationally and sensibly, such constructions of the drug-using subject do not just position them as other to the normative, valued citizen but also establish authority to *treat* them in disenfranchising

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ways: “Marking drug users with the stigma of debility and delusion simultaneously creates an arena of domination” in which they are seen “as appropriate targets for shows of strength, therapeutic or otherwise” (p. 319).

Consistent with this, also prominent throughout the texts were charges of individual weakness, made via constructions of the drug-using subject as ill-equipped to either deal with psychological distress or resist the temptation to use drugs. Indeed, such individuals were frequently constructed as having a reduced capacity to cope and/or to execute self-restraint due to innate deficits in their character or psychological makeup:

Mr Marquet couldn't get enough and at times went into debt with dealers to continue his drug addiction. He had a long-term weakness for recreational drugs such as marijuana and cocaine [newspaper article] (Adshead, 2006).

It is a story without a fairytale ending... Siti was an impressionable young daughter of a Malay fisherman who fell under the influence of a drug addict and trafficker well known to the police... [She had] a weakness for bad company [newspaper article] (Malan, 2005).

In both these texts moral and/or psychological weakness is constructed as innate to Mr Marquet and Siti. In describing Mr Marquet as having a “weakness” for other substances and Siti as having “a weakness for bad company”, these texts construct these individuals as encountering drug-related problems due to diminished moral or mental fortitude. Such constructions thus establish the individual's internal deficits as the cause of their difficulties; a move which is doubly-stigmatising as they are made other not only for engaging in undesirable conduct but also for being morally or psychologically flawed. Constructions which established such a relationship between illicit drug use and flaws in one's psychology and/or personality frequently emerged throughout the data:

Taking drugs to try and fit in with the crowd is a sign of emotional insecurity and lacks strength of character in chartering your own life [discussion post] (Marty McGuire, 2009).

A disgraced police officer turned to drugs to cope with personal problems and got in over his head when he became involved in selling them, a Perth court was told yesterday [newspaper article] (Lam, 2005).

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Although this second comment does not directly construct the individual's "character" as flawed as the first does, depicting a reliance on drugs as a way of coping with "personal problems" similarly establishes a strong connection between illicit drug use and psychological disturbance and simultaneously imputes a deficit in the internal capacity to cope with such difficulties – akin to the "emotional insecurity" that the first comment attributes to such subjects. Similar implications of pathology were also made possible through constructions of drug use as stemming from a need to "self-medicate" (Fitzpatrick, 2005), susceptibility to "peer pressure" (B.M.D, 2009) and an inability to "face realities" (Charlie, 2009).

Often therefore the drug-using subject was constructed as having a diminished or absent capacity to engage in rational decision-making due to aberrations or corruptions in their mind. As one comment stated:

Nobody in their right mind should touch tablets "cooked up" in some "make shift" laboratory by someone who may, or more likely may not, even know what they're doing [discussion post] (Steve, 2009).

Through the colloquialism of being 'out of your mind', which charges one with being "extremely stupid or mentally ill" (McIntosh, 2013), this comment similarly constructs people who use illicit drugs as lacking the capacity to act in rational and sensible ways; implying that they do not have access to the normative cognitive faculties necessary for making 'wise choices'. Consistent with this, notions of stupidity and idiocy were also drawn upon in texts to disqualify people who use illicit drugs from being seen as rational, sensible, well-functioning subjects:

Stupidity, not ecstasy [sic], killed this girl [discussion post] (MW, 2009).

The fact some young Australian travellers seem prepared to flout Indonesia's drug laws almost a year after Schapelle Corby was arrested at Bali's international airport, and more than three months after she was sentenced in a Denpasar court to 20 years' jail, is not the result of ignorance. If anything, it is the result of a delusion, common among young adults, that they are invincible, invulnerable and possibly even immortal. Just for their sakes, then, let's spell it out one more time: Drugs. Bali. Bloody idiot [newspaper article] (Jakarta Crackdown, 2005).

The analysis of such texts thus showed how people who use illicit drugs can be produced according to embedded notions of debility; with traditional ascriptions of

moral/psychological dysfunction as well as everyday lexicon both used to position such individuals as other to the norms of rationality, autonomy, and self-fortitude or self-discipline. And not only does discrediting drug-using subjects in these ways institute significant recourse for stigma, it makes it impossible for such individuals to qualify as full citizens; with the capacity for rational, self-determined, and productive action forming some of the fundamental requisites for claiming full citizenship (Rose & Miller, 1992).

3.3.1.2 Deceitful/untrustworthy

Other constructions which featured heavily in the texts analysed were those which charged the drug-using subject with untrustworthiness. As others have illustrated, constructions of diminished rationality (Roberts, valentine, & Fraser, 2009), personality deficits (Treloar & Holt, 2006), and the denial associated with compulsive behaviour (Keane, 2002) all have the effect of producing drug-using subjects as untrustworthy – be it due to an inability to be truthful and authentic (i.e., due to psychological or cognitive disorder), or an unwillingness to be truthful and authentic (i.e., due to social or moral deviance). This was evident in numerous texts, in which dishonesty was constructed as an inevitable corollary to the use of illicit drugs.

Accounts of how a “highly regarded public servant came crashing down” because of his alleged engagement in corruption and stealing “to feed his daily amphetamines addiction” (Adshead & Cowan, 2006) constructed the drug-using subject as deceitful in two ways. Firstly and most explicitly, these accounts produced a clear relationship between the use of illicit drugs and dishonest and disreputable conduct, with corruption and stealing constituting activities that signify marked deceit:

Mr Marquet started to build a web of deceit inside the Parliament building he had proudly represented for more than two decades, it was the beginning of the end for his otherwise commendable career [newspaper article] (Adshead & Cowan, 2006).

Secondly, such accounts were also shown to construct the drug-using subject as duplicitous and disingenuous through depictions of a “secret second life, far removed from all that trust and prestige placed in him” (Adshead, 2006):

Laurie Marquet’s death from AIDS-related illnesses on Saturday ends any chance of him standing for trial for corruption, perverting the course of justice, theft and possession of amphetamines. It also lifts a legal restriction which has prevented The

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West Australian from publishing details of the 59-year-old's *stunning double life as a drug addict and the Clerk of Parliaments and the Legislative Council* [newspaper article] (Adshead & Cowan, emphasis added).

Seear and Fraser's (2010a) analysis of similar accounts of the ostensible 'double life' Ben Cousins led as a successful footballer and self-identified drug addict suggests that Mr Marquet's daily use of amphetamines need not necessarily be produced in what that position it as antithetical to either his "otherwise commendable career" nor his trustworthiness. Their findings propose that it may instead be possible to construct his drug use as having complemented and intersected with his workplace identity and responsibilities: "For Cousins, the 'truth' of himself is that he is both compulsive and voluntaristic, with each reliant upon the other for its existence. Compulsion is not the antithesis of sporting success but a fundamental ingredient in it" (Seear & Fraser, 2010a, p. 449). The following extract shows how Mr Marquet's ostensible 'double life' could likewise be produced differently:

On one occasion the dealer watched Mr Marquet take a small container from a desk drawer and prepare some speed for injection. As he placed a thick rubber band around his arm, pumped his hand several times and drew back his syringe the Clerk of Parliaments watched the day's proceedings in the Legislative Assembly via a television monitor in his office. Within seconds he was high on speed and going about his important public duties. The drug ensured that the man from whom MPs would seek advice on a daily basis was very alert and very awake [newspaper article] (Adshead, 2006).

Thus, rather than constructing his drug use as an activity that was antithetical to his professional life and self (which establishes imputations of deceit) his drug use could be produced as "a fundamental ingredient" in his commendable career. Yet language such as "secret second life" and "web of deceit" resoundingly constructed Mr Marquet's participation in extensive drug use while working in a "highly regarded" profession as evidencing his duplicity and untrustworthiness.

Throughout the data drug-using subjects were positioned as untrustworthy in a number of authoritative ways. The construction of deceitfulness as a 'natural' corollary to addiction is a particularly striking example:

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A heroin addict who died five months into an intensive supervision court order was able to lie her way through attempts to rehabilitate her because privacy laws prevented revealing her medical treatment and authorities never questioned her honesty, an inquest was told yesterday... [Deputy State Coroner] Ms Vicker said addicts were by their nature deceitful and this should be expected when giving treatment [newspaper article] (Granath, 2005).

Powerfully positioning people who use illicit drugs as incapable of being open and honest, such statements ask professionals, or indeed anyone, to *expect* deceit and duplicity from such individuals – they are automatically constituted as “unreliable witnesses to their own suffering” (Roberts et al., 2009, p. 176). Accounts such as this thus bring into effect marked disenfranchisement; automatically discrediting such individuals and precluding them from being seen and treated as valid, trustworthy subjects. Any account in which the drug-using subject is produced as withholding some ‘truth’ or ostensibly being evasive – whether through deviant intention, or by consequence of the “nature” of their addiction, thus legitimates this process of disenfranchisement:

An inquiry in New Zealand has heard evidence that champion jockey Lisa Cropp took elaborate steps to avoid being drug-tested before a meeting in early May. Cropp, 33, who set a NZ riding record for the season just ended, is facing a drug-related charge before NZ racing's Judicial Control Authority. The mother of one is defending a charge of having been found to have methamphetamine -- a street drug known as speed -- in a urine sample taken from her after she rode at the Te Rapa meeting on May 7 [newspaper article] (Arrold, 2005).

How do you no [sic] she didn't down 3 pills for the hell of it? Plenty of people do it. Her friends might have been shitting themselves when things turned bad. Like any kids who finds [sic] themselves in trouble, make up one hell of a story to save your arse. 'Oh, she only took that many pills cause [sic] she was afraid of the cop dogs...' who knows [discussion post] (Seywhat, 2009).

These two texts thus construct drug-using subjects as taking part in “elaborate” avoidance or deception tactics in order to evade detection and/or punishment; practices which are distinctly at odds with the norms of authenticity and honesty, as well as responsibility that are expected of the ‘good citizen’. The othering that takes place through such accounts is thus highly effective. By making it impossible for the drug-using subject’s own accounts and experiences to be approached as valid and genuine, such constructions automatically and

irrevocably strip such individuals of any legitimacy and credibility. The promotion of “mail order drug tests” as having “vast” potential in parenting and occupational contexts (Rasdien, 2006) is an example of the disempowering and stigmatising practices that are legitimated through such constructions of deviance and disorder.

3.3.1.3 Dangerous

Although in contemporary western liberal culture risk has increasingly been constructed as a valuable part of life which allows one to live according to the ethics of self-improvement and to maximise opportunities for progression, this is only the case when individuals pursue the ‘right’ kinds of risks (O’Malley, 1996). Overwhelmingly throughout the data constructions of illicit drug use as inherently dangerous positioned such conduct as the ‘wrong’ kind of risk. Through the discourses of medicine illicit drugs were routinely constructed as inherently dangerous to people’s physical and mental health. Through these imputed impacts, intersecting with charges of moral corruption and ingrained assumptions about the nexus between drug use and crime, drug-using subjects were also constructed as inevitably dangerous.

The following two texts draw on the authority of medical expertise to construct the use of cannabis and amphetamines as highly dangerous:

Well of course, there is a well established connection between use of cannabis and the development of schizophrenia and psychotic episodes in families who have this genetic predisposition. I have seen it many times as a mental health worker, working with drug users, and have had personal experience of seeing the son of a close friend go down this path and eventually suicide during one such episode. We all thought that cannabis was harmless for a long time, but we now know that for many people it just isn't. Your teen's teacher was probably a bit misguided, misinformed or both. I'm glad your teen has got some good information, but don't play down the impact of cannabis too much. It can be dangerous [discussion post] (OzNana, 2009).

WA children as young as 13 are developing harmful addictions to amphetamines...The flood of cheap amphetamines, or speed, as unleashed health problems bigger than those associated with other drugs...[a] drug that doctors and health experts say is socially toxic because it produces severe psychiatric problems. With schoolchildren able to buy hits for as little as \$40, hospitals and mental health

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services are straining to keep up with patients with amphetamine-linked problems [newspaper article] (Titelius, 2006a).

Such accounts make it difficult to imagine the use of such substances leading to anything other than “severe psychiatric problems” and potentially death. They both illustrate how the expertise of the health profession (“a mental health worker” and “doctors and health experts”) can at times be drawn upon in ways that produce such links between drug use and physical and mental harm as almost inevitable. What’s more, the way these discourses are drawn upon here has the effect of constructing the illicit drug use as something that is profoundly alarming and threatening. Indeed, in these texts they construct illicit drug use as something that has “unleashed” pervasive, “bigger” “health problems”, and thus position it as a threat that we should not “play down”. The effect of these discourses in the above texts thus shows how these discourses have the propensity to be drawn upon in ways that make the dangerousness of illicit drugs seem indisputable.

Indeed, illicit drugs were frequently paired with alarming, inevitable harm or danger throughout the data:

It is a mark of crystal meth’s alarming side effects that it has made a big name for itself among the nation’s hospital emergency departments, psychiatric services and police [newspaper article] (Hodge, 2005).

Often this occurred through the use of medical metaphors:

I wish to goodness I knew what the answer to this scourge is but scourge it is and from what I saw, it is one that slowly but surely eats away at a society, like a cancer eats away at an organism [discussion post] (atomou, 2009).

As the evidence of the mental health impact of drug use mounts it is time we stopped pussy-footing over what to do about these plagues that take Australian lives and minds. We should view illicit drugs as what they are – poison [newspaper article] (“A Map of Madness”, 2005).

Importantly, beyond the explicit construction of drugs as “poison”, metaphors of drug use as a “scourge” and “plagues” extend the danger that illicit drug use is constructed as posing to individual physical and mental health to include threat to the health and integrity of society. Thus the tone of alarm these medicalised constructions of illicit drug use produced

were shown to establish the relationship between illicit drug use and pronounced danger as inevitable, not just for individuals but for society as a whole.

Such charges of inevitable dangerousness were not only made of the drugs themselves but also of drug-using subjects. In the same way that texts often constructed the link between drug use and mental illness is constructed as “well-established” (see above), so did they construct the link between drug use and crime as indisputable (see Simpson, 2003; Stevens, 2007). Consistent with other analyses of how illicit drug use is constructed in the Australian media (Elliot & Chapman, 2000; Jones, Hall, & Cowlin, 2008), the fact that the vast majority of newspaper articles analysed reported on criminal offences and legal proceedings highlighted the extent to which the relationship between illicit drug use and crime is constructed as routine and unquestionable. To some extent this relationship can be understood as product of the legal discourses which form such substances as unsanctioned. Notably however, not all of these articles reported on drug-related crimes (such as dealing, manufacturing, and possession). A substantial number reported on a host of other crimes and within these articles referred to the offender[s] as having a history of prior drug charges or the fact that illicit drugs were found at the scene. These included reports of violent crimes such as sex offences (O’Brien & Lam, 2005), child pornography (Eliot, 2005) and abuse (Gibson, 2005a), animal cruelty and bestiality (Hodge, 2005), and murder (Gibson, 2005b). Although substances were not always directly implicated as contributing to or accounting for these crimes, textually locating drug use alongside these violent crimes produces a connection between the drug-using subject and the violent offender and consequently constructs the drug-using subject as remarkably dangerous, often in markedly abject ways.

Medicalised constructions of illicit drug use as compromising people’s mental health were also shown to position drug-using subjects as dangerous. Research indicates that people with mental illnesses are routinely perceived as dangerous (Haslam, Ban, & Kaufmann, 2007; Nairn, 2007; Stier & Hinshaw, 2007; Wilson, Nairn, Coverdale, & Panapa, 1999); and in some texts such constructions of this nexus between drug use and severe mental illness were shown to produce the link between drug-using subject and crime as inevitable:

South Australian forensic psychiatrist Craig Raeside said the high rate of drug-taking by prisoners only increased the burden of mental illness. ‘Crime and mental illness and drugs are part of the same triangle,’ Dr Raeside said. ‘If you increase the drugs

then you would expect greater mental illness and crime. People who are crazy and psychotic will often do something illegal when they are affected' [newspaper article] (Roberts, 2006).

Constructions of the dangerousness of drugs convincingly intersected in this article with constructions of the dangerousness of drug-using subjects to position illicit drugs as having a causal relationship with both mental illness (i.e., making people "crazy and psychotic") and crime. Once again therefore, illicit drugs were constructed as inherently dangerous both for the people using them and the broader community. Pugh (2008) notes that similar constructions tend to occur in news coverage of hepatitis C, where "injecting drug users are represented stereotypically as endangering others" through the assumption that they were most likely to have the potential to pass the virus on to others through processes such as blood donation (p. 391). Such relationships thus authoritatively—through the intersecting discourses of psychiatry, medicine, and the law—position drug-using subjects as both deviant and disordered. Critically, it is through such constructions that drug-using subjects are positioned as a threat to the wider community; a sentiment that featured often in the online comments:

I wish the police would clean the drug scene up more often and maybe it would be safer to walk at night [discussion post] (Don't Cry, 2009).

It was clear, therefore, that constructions of the markedly and dangerously deviant drug-using other who "is supposed to steal, to lie, or even to kill, without being able to control himself" (Peretti-Watel, 2003, p. 321) were also privileged throughout these texts.

3.3.1.4 Abjection and exclusion

The most prominent constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects that emerged throughout these Australian news media and online discussion texts were thus consistent with those archetypal and longstanding constructions of such conduct and subjects as inevitably and markedly deviant and disordered. Critically, it was apparent that these prominent constructions of irrationality, weakness, untrustworthiness and dangerousness had profoundly stigmatising and marginalising effects. For example, such constructions were shown to position people who use illicit drugs in ways which undermine their capacity to assume valued cultural roles:

Drug-addicted parents should have their children removed if they could not clean up their act, Liberal backbencher Bronwyn Bishop said. It was not in the children's

best interests to stay with drug-addicted parents [newspaper article] (Ghandour, 2005).

Clearly such derisive, punitive charges of being unfit to parent arise out of those constructions of deviance and disorder which produce the drug-using subject as incapable of or disinclined to conduct themselves in a rational, trustworthy, responsible manner. It was thus apparent that a key effect of these prominent constructions was the positioning of people who use illicit drugs as fully other to the norms of (neo)liberal citizenship.

More than this however, in some texts constructions of deviance and disorder were shown to have the effect of producing drug-using subjects as entirely other to not only the normative citizen but to the human subject. The following extracts from newspaper articles showed how these constructions of deviance and disorder combined at times to make individuals who use illicit drugs into deeply “damaged” subjects:

A very damaged teenager from a very dysfunctional home: a homeless teenager and street prostitute by 13; an alcoholic and prescription drug abuser...[who] suffered abortions, numerous suicide attempts and many instances of self-harm [newspaper article] (Irving, 2005).

The scourge of addiction to speed has devastated many families. These are two cases which highlight the trauma. Paul does not paint a pretty picture of his life. He was often bashed by his dad and started shooting up heroin at 17 after he ran away from home. Paul hopped in and out of various WA jails, racking up 16 years jail time spread out across his 51 years. When Paul got his first taste of speed, or amphetamines, at the age of 21, he thought he'd found heaven. It gave him self-esteem which he had been lacking all his youth [newspaper article] (Titelius, 2006b).

These texts illustrate the confluent effects of constructions of deviance and disorder: the production of the abject other. That is, they show how numerous discourses coincide to establish the person who uses illicit drugs as “damaged” (i.e., as fundamentally other) in so many ways that they are seen and known in terms of utter “degradation” (Room, 2003, p. 229) and undesirability. Indeed, they show how through such constructions multiple markers of otherness accumulate to position the drug-using subject as having such “deep inner pathology” (Keane, 1999, p. 72) that they not only epitomise *all that is other* but that such deviance and/or disorder is *all that defines them*. In another article, the use of the

cultural idiom “in-the-gutter” provided another powerful example of how these constructions of deviance and disorder coalesced in texts to bring into effect such abject positioning:

Ms Morton spoke of being abused by her father and others, leaving home at 14 and becoming hooked on any drug she could get her hands on. Ms Healy, 30, a private school girl from a loving family, had been a heroin addict, prostitute and thief. ‘Six years ago I was an in-the-gutter heroin addict and none of you people may have stopped to speak to me -- I know I wouldn't have stopped to speak to me,’ she said [newspaper article] (Price, 2005).

The construction of this woman as “an in-the-gutter heroin addict” connotes a total loss of normativity and social standing, and shows how the privileging of constructions deviance and disorder can have the effect of making otherness so all-encompassing – to the point that the drug-using subject comes to be positioned as bereft of any traces of normality. Critically, what the final sentence above makes apparent is how such abjection can operate to produce and legitimate the dehumanisation of the drug-using subject: These constructions of such marked deviance and disorder make it possible for such individuals to be devalued to the point that they are excluded from social interaction and transaction. The above text thus exemplifies how constructions of drug-using subjects as irrational, weak, compulsive, and untrustworthy can operate to not only strip people who use illicit drugs of their normality but also of their humanness (see Rance & Treloar, 2015). Indeed, when the drug-using subject is positioned through constructions that inherently establish such diminished worth, such dehumanisation becomes an inevitable outcome. Throughout the data, it was certainly evident that at times such productions of the drug-using subject as bereft of normality or even humanity had the effect of constructing such individuals as knowable and treatable as nothing more than “lost souls” who are “beyond any help” (atomou, 2009).

3.3.2 Choice and responsibility: Culpable and dehumanised others

Importantly, although the above constructions of deviance and disorder were equally apparent in the newspaper articles and online comments, a particular set of constructions were found to only occur in the latter collection of texts. Indeed, as well as privileging constructions of irrationality, untrustworthiness and dangerousness the online comments analysed were also shown to privilege contemporary constructions of autonomy, choice and responsibility. Critically however, far from having the effect of

positioning the drug-using subject in normative, empowering terms, these constructions were shown to position such individuals in stigmatising and marginalising ways. Indeed, they were shown to position them as failed, culpable subjects and hence bring into effect significant dehumanisation.

Critically therefore, the second overarching theme that emerged in the analysis of the news-media texts echoed concerns expressed by a number of writers regarding the potential for contemporary constructions of rational, autonomous, responsible drug-using practices and subjects to reproduce the kind of stigma and marginalisation they set out to address. As discussed in the introduction, these normalising constructions of the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are considered to have the potential to bring into effect significant benefits for people who use illicit drugs, in the form of empowerment and legitimacy (Gowan et al., 2012; Jauffret-Routside, 2009; Keane, 2003; Moore, 2009; Moore & Fraser, 2006; Tammi & Hurme, 2007). However, alongside these potential benefits lies the potential for these constructions to simultaneously bring into effect understandings and expectations which are limited and create further disadvantage and stigma for people who use illicit drugs (Bourgois, 2000; Miller, 2001; Moore, 2009; Moore & Fraser, 2004; Rhodes, 2002).

Fraser and Moore (2010) point out that although the appropriation of the discourses of neoliberal subjectivity to produce drug-using subjects as self-regulating, self-disciplined citizens have been shown to have some benefits for people who use illicit drugs, they have likewise been shown to produce “unintended and unforeseen ethical and political consequences” for some of these individuals (p. 3), as although potentially empowering, this move to construct drug-using subjects as rational, responsible, and autonomous citizens can obscure the role of material and structural factors in the conduct of illicit drug use, and accordingly produce overly individualistic understandings of risk and responsibility which create understandings of illicit drug users that can be just as marginalising and stigmatising as constructions of deviance and disorder. Indeed, it has been contended that constructing drug-using subjects as normative, active, responsible citizens may generate more contemporary options for positioning such individuals as less than full citizens, as crystallising the management of risk when using illicit drugs as a matter of ‘individual choice’ means that when acceptable practices of risk reduction are not adhered to the individual is produced as culpable for having ‘failed’ to make the ‘right’ choice (Fraser, 2004; Moore, 2004; Reith, 2004; Roberts, et al., 2009). Thus, the move to construct such conduct and subjects in terms of individual responsibility has been shown to

apportion blame upon individuals for not living up to what is expected of rational, autonomous, self-governing citizens (Bourgois, 1999, 2000; Karasaki et al., 2012; Rhodes, 2002; Seear et al., 2010).

The findings that emerged in the analysis of the online comments corresponded with these concerns. Rather than positioning the drug-using subject in a manner that afforded greater social and political inclusion, such contemporary constructions operated in these texts to bring into effect additional avenues for marginalising, excluding and dehumanising people who use illicit drugs. With the online comments data drawn from discussion boards asking for reader comments on the debate about the “personal responsibility” of people who use illicit drugs (Stronarch, 2009), these texts were incorporated into this initial inquiry precisely because they provided an opportunity to explore these contemporary constructions. Importantly, what emerged from the analysis were clear examples of how these constructions can charge individuals who use illicit drugs with “failing’ the test of neoliberalism” (Moore & Fraser, p. 3045). More than this, however, the analysis also generated examples of how such constructions can also apportion blame upon such individuals in a manner that can bring into effect particularly trenchant forms of dehumanisation.

3.3.2.1 Failed, culpable citizens

Far from having the effect of contesting the positioning of the drug-using subject as other, constructions of the acts and subjects of illicit drug use in terms of individual choice, active-decision making, and responsibility in the online comments were shown to position such subjects as markedly other. Although they did provide a contrast to the constructions presented earlier which produce such subjects as incapable of exercising choice and responsibility, these contemporary constructions of the drug-using subject as rational, volitional subjects were shown to produce such individuals as other in a different way. Indeed, overwhelming throughout the data they were shown to produce such subjects as failing to make ‘good’ choices and as responsible or culpable for the consequences of this failure:

We control our destiny, choices control our outcome in life, someone made a bad decision. [Harm is] No one else’s fault but the decision maker [discussion post] (the guru, 2009).

She made the decision to buy and take drugs so, as sad as what happened is, the responsibility begins and ends with her [discussion post] (dave, 2009).

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Importantly therefore, such instances provided provocative examples of the concerns expressed elsewhere about the potential for constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects in terms of volition and choice to have problematic rather than normalising effects. Indeed, it was evident throughout the analysis that rather than bringing into effect normalising positions, more often these constructions produced the drug-using subject as distinctly other to the normative subject who makes 'good' decisions in the interest of their safety, health, productivity, etc. Thus, a key theme that consistently emerged throughout the analysis was the way that such constructions of volition and choice operated to position the drug-using subject as deserving of full blame for any harm they encounter:

Everyone is screaming for more education and more laws. Well there is enough education on drugs and laws already. It's not like these drugs are new and arrived on the market overnight. Most of these stupid dopes choose to ignore the risks or consequences and take drugs anyway [discussion post] (tman, 2009).

I do not feel sorry for Gemma Thoms, unless she has been living on another planet she would undoubtedly have known that taking ecstasy had risks including death, she chose to take the drugs and died. I have compassion for her family and friends and I hope that something good comes out of this and some other young person thinks twice and decides drugs are not for them [discussion post] (Steve, 2009).

Regardless of the different motivations of ppl the one thing that never changes (except in the case of drink spiking) is that the individuals choose to take the drugs. Individuals who unless they have been living under a rock know the risks involved. The event organisers do not encourage drug taking or force ppl to take them, and the cops certainly don't make ppl take them so there is no justification in pointing the blame at them for incidences such as this. Unfortunately in this instance the only person who can be responsible for this is the young girl who choose to bring 3 not 1 but 3 pills to the BDO, knowing the risk of being searched [discussion post] (Been there, 2009).

Again therefore, contrary to the subject of addiction who is made other through an ostensible inability to act rationally and volitionally, in these texts the neoliberal drug-using subject is positioned as other through the construction of their conduct as an outcome of the individual's choice to disregard the risks of which they "undoubtedly" aware. Such comments thus show how constructions of individual choice and calculated decision-making can position the drug-using subject in markedly stigmatising and marginalising ways

– as failed and culpable citizens. What emerged in these texts thus seemed to exemplify Rhodes' (2002) concern with the way that discourses of risk management and individual responsibility in western liberal culture result in individuals being “blamed” for “wilfully engaging in risky behaviour” (p. 86).

Indeed, it was noticeable in the online comments how the discourses of individual responsibility and risk management brought about a shift away from the tradition of constructing the drugs themselves as primary agents of harm and towards the construction of the individual and their *mismanagement* of risk as the sole determinant of harm:

Her choice to have possession of 3 tablets. Her stupid choice to put them into her mouth. Only one person to blame in this instance as harsh as it may sound to some [discussion post] (Sean, 2009).

The warning to others is clear. Put something into your system when you know not for sure what it contains and the danger is that you will not be us for long. Alas, those who are prepared to take illicit drugs of any kind do not give a second thought to the possibility of death; it will not happen to me. This is not the first death as result of taking illicit drugs and it sadly will not be the last. Police need to keep up the fight and I for one do not blame them. The responsibility is with the drug user [discussion post] (hot2009, 2009).

Again therefore it was apparent throughout the online comment data that these constructions of the autonomous, responsible and active drug-using subject do not necessarily redress the extent to which they are stigmatised and marginalised as other, but rather can add to these outcomes; as in these instances such constructions clearly positioned such individuals as making “stupid” choices that fail to adequately take into account the risks, and hence positioned them as the “only...person to blame”.

Thus, the way that such contemporary constructions devolve all responsibility to the individual was shown in these texts to bring about an additional avenue through which the drug-using subject can be marked as somehow bad, incompetent, or wrong:

When people see that people are having a great time on it [ecstasy] and come out perfectly fine it makes people believe that they too can do it. More time [sic] than [not] most people walk away perfectly fine, and until one knows how it will effect them, the only thing you can do is to help try and make it safer by teaching one

how to look after themselves and there [sic] friends during use [discussion post] (comment 60, 2009).

The law is the law and this SEVENTEEN year old girl made the wrong choice for even considering to purchase or bring the pills with her. She took them at once because she KNEW they would get her in serious trouble if found with them. Open your eyes up people, SHE made the wrong choice. Not the police, the law, the government. It was her CHOICE to bring them to the festival and her CHOICE to consume them. Its sad she's not with us now and able to live her life.. But she made that choice and now everyone she has left behind has to deal with the loss [discussion post] (Gen-Y'er, 2009).

These comments show how, via the discourses of neoliberal subjectivity, individuals who use illicit drugs are charged with the task of ensuring their own safety – they are expected to be knowledgeable of their limits (i.e., to ‘know thyself’ – Foucault, 1988), to be knowledgeable of the risks, and to thus “look after themselves” accordingly (see Duff, 2004; Plumridge & Chetwynd, 1998; Rødner, 2005). Once again, therefore, they show how this this alignment with the neoliberal subject has the potential to position such individuals as failing this duty and as culpable for this failure. In the first comment, the expectations of self-knowledge and self-care establish harm as a consequence of inadequate knowledge of oneself. In the second comment, expectations of rational decision-making establish having the effect of establishing harm as an outcome of “wrong” choices (in which the drug-using subject is admonished for prioritising the interests of fun and pleasure over the duty of self-care). These charges of failure and culpability were made frequently throughout the data:

I dont think toughening the penalties are going to stop people taking drugs. People have and will always take drugs. the type of drug is a personal choice. I think the real issue here is the young girl didnt know her limit. If one chooses to do drugs then they should be informed of all the pros and cons so that they can make an informed choice rather than going for pot luck. I would also put money on it that the coroner finds more than what was in the ecstasy pills in her system. I've heard this story too many times to believe she OD on 3 ecstasy pills [discussion post] (Graham, 2009).

On that day at that time she had a choice and unfortunately the choices she made cost her her life. How dare you blame the Police for the stupid act of a child more

concerned with getting value for her money and more concerned for getting that great buzz, then for her own safety and well being [discussion post] (Copper, 2009).

In the first comment the discourses of choice operate to construct drug-related harm as an outcome of the individual's failure to be adequately reflexive and informed (e.g., "the real issue here is the young girl didnt know her limit"). While in the second comment, the drug-using subject is once again set apart from the 'good citizen' for prioritising the 'wrong' things (Keane, 2004); this time not for being incapable of making the 'right' choice to prioritise "safety and well being" over consumption and pleasure, but for deliberately choosing to eschew this ordering of priorities.

These findings are thus in keeping with research elsewhere which has illustrated how the individualisation of responsibility apports injecting drug users with blame and guilt for not adopting 'safe' injecting practices (Seear, Fraser, & Lenton, 2010). The ways in which the discourses of neoliberal government and subjectivity render individuals culpable for harms that are better understood as "the product of a network of interlocking individual, social, political and medical responsibilities" (Fraser, 2004, p. 202) have thus been shown to provide further opportunities for drug-using subjects to be cast as failed and/or deviant subjects (see also Bourgois, 1998). Thus, despite the fact that such constructions of responsibility and choice emerged out of the intention to redress the inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising ways in which the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are typically constructed, such discourses have been shown to have the potential to produce illicit drug use in ways that are just as problematic. As Mayock (2005) describes:

It is easy to see how talk about the role of choice in drug taking, however well intentioned, can inadvertently dovetail into moral arguments about the need for greater individual responsibility as a means of solving the drugs 'problem'.

Paradoxically then, the emphasis on rational decision-making, guided in the main by cost/benefit analysis, can serve to reinforce the notion of drug users as 'other', seeing them not simply as outside the social order, but as outsiders who refuse to conform to the advice of experts (p. 351).

The data analysed here thus provides examples of the way that these contemporary moves can paradoxically reproduce the inadequate, stigmatising, and marginalising outcomes they set out to address. As I discuss next, what made this even more apparent were a number of other comments in which these constructions of individual failure and blame were shown

to bring into effect the kind of otherness which mirrors that brought into effect through constructions of deviance and disorder.

3.3.2.2 Dehumanised through choice and responsibility

The most striking theme that stood out when analysing the way that the discourses of individual choice and responsibility constructed the drug-using subject in terms of failure and culpability was the way that these constructions seemed to have the same kind of dehumanising effects as those constructions of deviance and disorder. Indeed, in the same way that imputations of a loss of rationality and autonomy can relegate the drug-using subject from being seen and treated as fully human (Keane, 2003), it was apparent in the online comment texts that such dehumanisation can likewise occur through contemporary constructions of the volitional, responsible drug-using subject:

The young girl who died decided her own fate. I have no sympathy for people who do drugs and die, only their families who are left with the mess [discussion post] (Mel, 2009).

Here the drug-using subject is deemed undeserving of the human dignity of “sympathy” not because she is irrational and compulsive, but precisely because she is understood to be volitional and therefore to have “decided her own fate”. These dehumanising effects frequently emerged throughout the data; where the constructions of the drug-using subject’s harm as a product of individual choice positioned her as undeserving of such compassion – a move which diminishes their entitlement to the same human rights as others, and which thus could be seen as diminishing their very humanness (see Gowan et al., 2012).

The following comments in which the experience of drug-related harm was contrasted with the experience of harm in the context of war and natural disasters highlight how the kind of dehumanisation these discourses of individual choice can bring into effect:

No sympathy for people who take illegal drugs.

They know the legal and medical risks.

They don't know the source of the drug.

How many people have died in the last month in Gaza and Zimbabwe or in Sudan that deserve real sympathy.

It was her choice to take the risks [discussion post] (Joel, 2009).

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Why would anyone say it is a tragedy (Trent of 8:44am today). A tragedy is when a tsunami hits a town, a girl overdosing is not. it is not an accident either (Man who has been there of Mt Lawley 6:11pm). There is no such thing as an accident. Her death was caused by overdosing on ecstasy that she took herself. I truly doubt her drugs accidentally slipped out of her hand into her mouth after she accidentally bought them from a drug dealer by accident. She knew what she was doing and paid the price [discussion post] (Silly girl, 2009).

Once again, deservingness of compassion is constructed in these texts as determined according to the apparent role of choice (or lack thereof) in engendering the conditions in which harm is encountered; the extent to which humane responses such as sympathy, understanding, and compassion are deemed warranted is again connected to the degree to which an individual is seen to have had choice in being exposed to risk. Thus it is apparent here how constructions of illicit drug use as an active choice can operate to preclude the experience of drug-related harm from being acknowledged as 'accidental' or 'tragic'. On the contrary, they show how the language of cost-benefit analysis can construct such harm as a consequence or "price" one can reasonably expect from engaging in such conduct rather than as something that warrants empathy and compassion.

A sophisticated version of this relationship between the construction of drug-using subjects in terms of individual choice and responsibly and dehumanising outcomes was constructed in another two comments, in which the degree of culpability and thus the degree of humanity apportioned was constructed as not only determined by the degree of individual choice but also by the degree of risk involved:

So, if they are 'victims' they are not victims in the same category as say the 'victims' of the Victorian Bushfires....the underlying thing is that there is still the 'option' to 'choose' not to take the risk, although I guess there is an 'inherent' risk in choosing to live in the Australian Forest areas....it's still not quite the same [discussion post] (The Reg, 2009).

This may sound blunt, but at the moment I am listening to the news regarding the Victorian bushfires, where to this moment the death toll is 84, These people and their families deserve our sympathy. I'm not saying that the pill takers don't, but at least they had more choice than the fire victims [discussion post] (popehelen, 2009).

These comments also construct the choice to live in bushfire-prone environments as far less of a breach of the ethic of risk management and responsible conduct than the choice to take illicit drugs. Importantly then, they show how contemporary constructions of choice can operate *alongside* those more traditional constructions of danger. In these texts contemporary and traditional constructions operate in concert to position the drug-using subject as more accountable for the harm they encounter (by constructing them as making the “choice” to expose themselves to the *inevitable* risk of illicit drug use, as opposed to exposing themselves to *potential* risk of living in the Australian bush). Thus it is through *both* sets of constructions that such individuals are constructed as other (i.e., as reckless) and therefore as less deserving of undeserving of “sympathy”. Ultimately therefore, these seemingly opposing constructions are shown here to have the potential to operate simultaneously to position the drug-using subject as less deserving of human regard in comparison to those subjects who make ‘better’, less risky choices.

The findings discussed here thus add to concerns expressed by a number of authors regarding the potential for the discourses of normalisation and harm to not only establish “political benefits in terms of recognition, trust and legitimation” (Moore & Fraser, 2006, p. 3036) but also create further stigma, disadvantage and exclusion for people who use illicit drugs (Bourgois, 2000; Fraser, 2004; Miller, 2001; Moore, 2009; Moore & Fraser; Rhodes, 2002). Indeed, in showing how constructions of the rational, autonomous, responsible drug-using subject, particularly in relation to encounters with drug-related harm, can operate as another viable means through which people who use illicit drugs can be positioned as other to the norms and values of western (neo)liberal culture, the findings above underscore these existing concerns. This suggests, therefore, that despite the potential benefits of these contemporary discourses it may be important to explore the extent to which they form part of a new moral code which produces the same kind of problematic effects that have long impacted on people who use illicit drugs. As Fischer et al. (2004) write,

The practices of harm reduction in general and SISs [supervised injecting services] in particular have mobilised an elaborate new moral code of what defines a responsible, well-behaved and safe drug user and have thus created a persuasive new ‘moral enterprise’ enacting its own distinct set of norms and values (p. 362).

For those people whose drug-using practices and lifestyles are easily aligned with the criteria of this code, this contemporary moral enterprise is one that can afford a greater

sense of inclusion and legitimacy. Fischer and colleagues stress however that an additional effect of this new moral code is that:

Those drug users who reveal themselves to be unable or unwilling to take advantage of the new progressive possibilities remain vulnerable to the more punitive measures... they are more receptive targets for the labels of 'high-risk', 'beyond help', or even 'dangerous' (pp. 362-363).

Thus, such authors raise concerns about the potential for the construction of the acts and subjects of illicit drug use in terms of the discourses of neoliberal subjectivity to bring into effect the very same problems of stigma, exclusion and disenfranchisement that it was hoped they would address. That is, there exists some concern that these contemporary constructions are not in fact an alternative to traditional constructions of deviance and disorder, but rather a new format for producing illicit drug use and those who take part in it as other. Indeed, Rhodes (2002) suggests that the new public health movement of in/through which the drug-using subject is constructed in terms of individual choice and responsibility is perhaps best understood as "offering 'new words' to an 'old tune'" (p. 87). I would argue that the findings from the analysis of the news-media texts pose this very same concern. In the texts analysed contemporary constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects generally did not operate to address the problematic outcomes of constructions of deviance and disorder, but rather often appeared to bring into effect precisely the same inadequate, stigmatising, marginalising and ultimately dehumanising understandings that are brought into effect via constructions of deviance and disorder.

3.4 Old and new constructions converge: Same old otherness

Overall the findings from this exploratory analysis of newspaper and online comment texts showed the prominence of both constructions of deviance and disorder and of individual choice and responsibility. Critically however, despite the apparent divergence between these two prominent ways of constructing such conduct and subjects there seemed to be less divergence apparent in their effects. Indeed, it seemed that whether the acts and subjects of illicit drug use were constructed in terms of irrationality, untrustworthiness, dangerousness or rationality, autonomy, and responsibility the outcome of otherness remained unchanged. In much the same way that Seddon (2010) describes therefore, it seemed that in these texts contemporary constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects did not operate as a "successor" to those of deviance and disorder but operated as an additional "cohabitee in the field" (p. 340). Moreover, it seemed that *both*

these sets of constructions which dominated the news-media texts worked to produce the drug-using subject as other, with the newer addition of the failed and culpable (i.e., irresponsible) subject operating alongside more traditional positions of the immoral (i.e., deviant) and/or unwell (i.e., disordered) subject. The findings thus raise questions about the possibility that although there is likely to be divergence and disjuncture in the prominent ways in/through which the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are currently constructed in Australia, the outcomes of these differing constructions might not be quite as different as one would expect.

Often it seemed to be the extent to which such acts and subjects were constructed in a decontextualised manner which brought about such problematic effects. That is, the emphasis on individual deficit, disorder, dysfunction, failure etc., with little consideration of the role of numerous structural, social, political and material constraints on how one can or cannot behave seemed to be a key theme which made these constructions and their effects so dramatic. This lack of contextualisation appeared to obscure the complexities of such conduct and subjectivities and instead overemphasised the importance of individual determinants. These findings thus highlight why critical social researchers have called for greater contextualisation of illicit drug use as a measure for countering the extreme stigma, marginalisation and dehumanisation that decontextualised constructions bring into effect (Bourgois, 1998, 2000; Duff, 2015; Fraser, 2004; Moore, 2008; Rhodes et al., 2007; Rhodes et al., 2009). Specifically, the way that the discourses of neoliberal subjectivity produced positions of otherness in the online comments analysed in a manner that were comparable to those produced by more traditional constructions of deviance and disorder suggests that the concerns expressed by others about the risk of these contemporary constructions producing further stigma and marginalisation (Bourgois, 2000; Miller, 2001; Moore, 2009; Moore & Fraser, 2004; Rhodes, 2002) warrant further exploration. What arose out of the findings that emerged from this contextual was a further rationale for the second part of the research – the intensive interviews with people who use illicit drugs.

Indeed, it is important to acknowledge that alongside concerns about the problematic effects of the discourses of neoliberal subjectivity also exists a significant body of research which places importance on these contemporary discourses as offering people who use illicit drugs an empowering and legitimating recourse for contesting imputations of otherness (Gowan et al., 2012; Jauffret-Routside, 2009; Keane, 2003; Moore, 2009; Moore & Fraser, 2006; Tammi & Hurme, 2007). Thus, given these tensions it seems pertinent to question what people who use illicit drugs make of these discourses. Critically therefore,

the findings from the analysis of news-media texts generated further questions to be explored in the second part of the research – the intensive interviews conducted with a number of people who use illicit drugs. In particular, the findings from this contextual analysis suggested that it would be valuable to explore in the interviews the participants' take on the value of these normalising accounts (i.e., did they see them as an appropriate measure for addressing the shortcomings in how they and their actions are constructed?) and to examine the effects of these contemporary accounts (i.e., were they *effective* at addressing such shortcomings or did they reproduce problematic constructions?). Further, given the potential limitations of these contemporary accounts, it seemed apposite to examine whether the participants put forth any alternative approaches for addressing stigmatising and marginalising constructions of their conduct and subjectivities. As I discuss in chapter four, due to the findings that emerged from this analysis of news-media texts therefore, the analysis of the intensive interview data incorporated exploration of these more specific questions alongside those areas of inquiry identified in the introduction.

Chapter Four

4. Interview Methodology

In this chapter I detail the methodological processes that were adopted in conducting and analysing the intensive interviews. This includes description of the participant selection process and an overview of the demographics of the people I spoke to. I then outline the intensive interviewing style and how this shaped my approach to conducting the interviews. Importantly, this approach to interviewing can generate unique ethical issues, which along with other concerns regarding ethics are also discussed. Finally, I present a detailed outline of the in-depth analytic framework which guided my analysis of the interview data, emphasising how this analytic approach generates a sufficiently broad and deep engagement with the interview data and thus how this approach is uniquely suited to the objectives of both deconstruction and the exploration of new thought.

4.1 Participant selection

Contrary to quantitative approaches, qualitative research is not typically concerned with generalising findings at a population level, thus recruitment of participants is not driven by the need to access a representative sample of a given population (Polkinghorne, 2005). Rather, the process of selecting participants in qualitative research is driven by the purpose of the research. Ensuring that the selection process and participant numbers are specifically chosen with the research aims in mind is considered to be one of the central factors which determine the power of qualitative research (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).

In conducting this research I aimed to generate questions about the divergent and disjunctive ways in which illicit drug use is accounted for and responded to in western neoliberal settings by examining how some people who use illicit drugs make sense of this mess. Given that the way illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are constructed varies significantly according to substance (e.g., cannabis and ecstasy vs. heroin and methamphetamine), route of administration (e.g., smoking and ingesting vs. injecting), pattern of use (e.g., occasional vs. daily use) (AVIL, 2011), it was considered important to speak to a wide range of individuals, whose drug-using practices were sufficiently diverse. The process of selecting participants was thus based on the principle of maximum variation (Sandelowski, 1995), in which,

a wide range of individuals, groups, or settings is purposively selected such that all or most types of individuals, groups, or settings are selected for the inquiry. In this way, the multiple perspectives of individuals can be presented that exemplify the complexity of the world (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007, p. 112)

Maximising the diversity of the sample in this way aimed to provide the greatest opportunity to detect any differences in the relevance or adequacy of differing constructions that might emerge from difference in terms of drugs used, patterns of use, route of administration, and so forth. This approach also allowed for discrepant case analysis in which “disconfirming instances of a phenomenon” were compared “with confirming instances in order to understand the complexities of the phenomenon” (Morrow, 2005, p. 256). As Barbour (2001) describes,

With purposive sampling, researchers deliberately seek to include ‘outliers’ conventionally discounted in quantitative approaches. It allows for such deviant cases to illuminate, by juxtaposition, those processes and relations that routinely come into play thereby enabling the ‘exception to prove the rule’ (p. 1115).

This analytic process assists in establishing the trustworthiness of the findings (Morrow, 2005; see chapter two). Further, by identifying potential similarities in how participants formed understandings of their conduct and selves, participants were selected in this way to increase the opportunity to generate hypotheses about deeper cultural processes involved in how we produce illicit drug use and the drug-using subject, as “conjoining people’s apparently different stories can illuminate larger social phenomena” (Stiles, 1993, p. 601).

4.1.1 Participation criteria

Participants were eligible to participate if they had used an illicit drug (such as cannabis, heroin or ‘homebake’¹, amphetamine/methamphetamine, ecstasy, or cocaine) in the last six months. This time frame enabled a wide range of drug-using patterns, including infrequent use, to be included. Initially, previous engagement in treatment for drug and/or alcohol problems was stipulated as an exclusion criterion, as the literature identifies that in the context of substance use treatment the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are produced in a variety of ways that are specific to the practices and discourses of such treatment (e.g., Keane, 2000, Neale, Nettleton & Pickering, 2011) and thus examination of the ways in which illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are specifically produced in the context of treatment practices and discourses was deemed beyond the scope of this research. However, as the collection and analysis of data unfolded and an emphasis on deeper knowledge practices evolved this criterion was discarded, as it was no longer considered a meaningful distinction to make. Consistent with the rationale of purposive

¹ Home-made heroin alternative made from codeine-based pharmaceuticals.

sampling (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007), this adjustment was made in response to the refinement of the research aims as the analysis took place. The understandings of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects made available/unavailable through the processes of treatment and recovery were, however, not specifically explored as part of the research.

4.1.2 Qualitatively considering power

As qualitative inquiry is typically not concerned with the generalisability of findings to a population, it is generally accepted that the quantitative mantra of 'big is best' is ill-suited to the consideration of participant numbers in qualitative research (Bourgois, 1999; see also Morrow, 2005; Rhodes & Moore, 2001). The concepts of theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) or informational redundancy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) are typically cited as the determinant of adequate data in qualitative approaches. These concepts propose that the size of the data set is not determined a priori but rather is determined through the process of data collection and analysis: when no new information is forthcoming from new data saturation or redundancy is said to be reached and no further data is required.

Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) stress however that the qualitative researchers do not always pay sufficient "attention to the role that sample sizes play in the quest to attain data saturation" (p. 116). They propose that the following principles need to be considered carefully prior to the selection of data:

In general, sample sizes in qualitative research should not be too small that it is difficult to achieve saturation. At the same time, the sample should not be too large that it is difficult to undertake a deep, case-oriented analysis (p. 116).

This second point was an important factor to consider when selecting participants for this research. As will be discussed shortly, the deconstructive method used to analyse the interview data involved not only undertaking a deep, case-oriented analysis but also involved analysing each case or interview from the vantage point of four different levels or layers. Thus, Onwuegbuzie and Leech's (2007) point that data selection "involves more than the number of participants included in the study" (p. 117) was also instructive. By this they argue that the amount of contact with participants (i.e., number of times they are interviewed) and the length of the interviews also impact on the issue of the adequacy of data, as these contribute to the richness of information (see also Morrow, 2005). Given that these concerns centre on ensuring the richness of information upon which the interpretations are based, the analytic method adopted arguably also plays a role in

determining how rich, and therefore, how adequate, the data is. As discussed at the end of the chapter, due to ethical considerations, participants in this study were only interviewed once. However, because the interview data was analysed from four different vantage points, the level of engagement with the data was greater than in typical qualitative analyses; this issue was thus taken into consideration when deciding on the number of people to interview. As Bell (2004) points out, conducting such close and detailed analysis of a smaller number of stories can also be considered to reduce the risk of “fragmenting individual narratives” (p. 100). Indeed, I believe that this deep analytic engagement with a ‘small’ selection of data made it possible to notice more the less obvious processes that undergirded the individual narratives; inexplicit aspects of the data which were shown to tie together the participants’ very different stories and experiences.

The most significant factor which determined the number of people I interviewed however was that of saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; see also Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Some of the key findings discussed in the following chapters were emergent in the data even in the early stages of collection/analysis. Borrowing from the quantitative principles of statistical power and significance, the fact that saturation was reached with so few participants could be interpreted as indicating that the patterns that emerged within the data represent particularly powerful and significant cultural processes.

4.1.3 Inviting participation

In keeping with the objectives outlined above, four recruitment strategies were purposefully pursued in order to maximise the potential of accessing a wide range of people, who use a variety of different drugs in a variety of different ways, and who are from a variety of socio-demographic contexts. The selection methods included:

1. *Advertisements at Curtin University.* Posters of A4 size were distributed via billboards across Curtin University’s Bentley campus². This line of recruitment was considered most likely to facilitate access to younger individuals who are more likely participate in patterns of illicit drug use that contrast with dependent patterns of use (i.e., that are controlled and limited to particular times, spaces, and events, with an absence of the experiences of tolerance, withdrawal, cravings, etc., and as most typically associated with the use of cannabis, amphetamines, ecstasy, and other amphetamine type stimulants). As research conducted in Australia associates such types and patterns of drug use with

² Curtin University’s Bentley campus is located 11km from the centre of Perth, Western Australia’s capital.

younger, educated, middle class populations (AIHW, 2014; Duff, 2005; Green & Moore, 2009; Pennay & Moore, 2010), it was anticipated that recruitment from a university population would facilitate the inclusion of this demographic.

2. *Flyers at 'head shops'*. Leaflets were placed in two 'head shops' in Perth's central business district. A 'head shop' is defined as "a shop specializing in articles (as hashish pipes and roach clips) of interest to drug users" (Merriam Webster, 2013). This line of recruitment was identified as an avenue to accessing people who may engage in a variety of forms of substance use, particularly those who smoke cannabis and who identify with the social and popular aspects of drug culture. This was thus considered to be a setting in which to access individuals who engage in types of drug use that are less likely to be associated with significant health and social problems, but who may come from a wider socio-demographic background than university students.

3. *Flyers and word-of-mouth in a metropolitan needle-and syringe exchange service*. In order to access participants who engage in injecting drug use, and therefore are most likely to be using substances such as opiates and amphetamines, the project was advertised verbally and through flyers at a needle and syringe exchange service operating in the Perth metropolitan area. Accessing participants who inject was considered particularly important given the extent to which such conduct and those engaged in it are stigmatised and marginalised (AVIL, 2011; Conner & Rosen, 2008; Fraser, 2011; Fraser & Treloar, 2006; Lancaster, Santana, Madden, & Ritter, 2015; Moore, 2004; Rhodes et al., 2007; Simmonds & Coomber, 2009; Tindal et al., 2010; Wolfe, 2007; Zadjow, 2006). It was also anticipated that recruitment via this setting would facilitate the inclusion of participants who engage in more regular patterns of drug use and who come from a wider social and economic demographic.

4. *Flyers distributed throughout my own extended network of peers*. The use of my network of peers was included in order to facilitate access to individuals who would not be accessible through drug-related services and who would be unlikely to respond to advertisements. Some of these participants were known to me as friends, or as friends of friends. However several of these participants were recruited through my peers' own friend and family networks and were not known to me.

Advertisements and flyers provided participants with information about the research purpose (to gain an understanding of the ways in which people talk about and understand illicit drug use), the participation criteria (outlined above), what would be

required of them (to consent to take part in an anonymous interview discussing the different ways that they talk about and understand their own illicit drug use), and that they would be recompensed for their time with a sum of \$25. Participants were asked to contact me via phone to arrange an interview at a time and place of their choosing. They were invited to use a pseudonym when contacting me, should they wish to do so. Interviews took place in a variety of settings, such as participants' homes, public parks, and in an office in the School of Psychology at Curtin University. In the case of the four participants who were recruited at the needle and syringe exchange service, staff members informed participants of times when I would be present at the service and available to conduct interviews. Upon arrival to the service, these participants were then introduced to me using pseudonyms of their choice.

4.1.4 Demographics and patterns of illicit drug use

Twenty one people were interviewed. Their ages ranged from twenty-one to sixty-one years. Just over half identified as using opiates, cannabis, or amphetamines on a daily basis. A third described using a range of substances—cannabis, ecstasy, amphetamines, cocaine, hallucinogens—once a month or less. Of the remaining participants, some identified as using cannabis and amphetamines more than once a week and three reported that they had not used any substances in the last two months due to deciding to cease their use, but that prior to this their use of amphetamines had ranged from more than once a week to once a month or less. Just under a third of participants reported currently engaging in injecting drug use, and two others reported having injected previously. Over half were engaged in full or part time work in the health, construction, finance and IT industries, four were engaged in full time study, four were on a disability pension, and two were stay-at-home mothers.

4.2 Interview process: An intensive approach

Interviews were conducted between May 2008 and August 2009. On three occasions participants requested to be interviewed with their partners, the remaining participants were interviewed one-to-one. The interviews were conducted according to the principles of intensive interviewing (Charmaz, 2004). Compared to more traditional structured or semi-structured formats, this style of interviewing pursues broad, open-ended questions that are guided by a set of thematic prompts. When conducting the pilot interview I had intended to use a more semi-structured approach to questions, however I found that using a more responsive, mutually reflective approach engendered deeper exploration of the different ways in which the participant constructed her illicit drug use

and formed a sense of self in relation to these. In subsequent interviews, therefore, thematic prompts were used to guide the discussion. These included, but were not limited to, issues such as: the meaning of their illicit drug use, how it fits into one's life and relates to one's sense of self, perceived truths and misconceptions about illicit drug use, the reactions of others to one's illicit drug use, preferred understandings/terms, and desire for different reactions and understandings. These prompts however evolved over time in response to emerging analytic reflections, meaning that emerging hypotheses were not only informed by the interviews, but similarly were used to inform subsequent interviews. Consistent with the process of IGRP, this allowed the data collection and analysis to develop incrementally (Bishop et al., 2002). The layering effect that this produced also paralleled the form of analysis that was adopted; with the process of comparing and contrasting the different realities constructed in each interview (Charmaz, 2004) allowing a rich, layered inquiry to take place.

Although often conversational in tone, the style of an intensive interview differs from that of conventional conversations in that it "follows a different etiquette" which "goes beneath the surface of ordinary conversation" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 36). This process includes asking participants to elaborate on meanings and requesting clarification of the statements that they make. It thus facilitates deeper reflections and produces a more reflexive, intensive inquiry. It also involves a greater focus on the emotive dimensions of what is being discussed, and in doing so requires the researcher to take part emotionally in the interview in order to validate and further explore such emotions (Charmaz, 2006). The dynamic this created was found to be particularly conducive to questioning taken-for-granted knowledges and exploring the implications of such knowledges for participants. It also fostered opportunities for participants to feel that they could "express thoughts and feelings disallowed in other relationships and settings" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 27). The impacts that this element of intensive interviewing had in the context of conducting interviews with people who use illicit drugs warrant close inspection.

As was highlighted in the analysis (see chapter five), participants expressed significant concern about the extent to which their understandings, experiences, and wishes are often unheard or disregarded in various settings because of cultural assumptions about illicit drug use which prompt individuals who use illicit drugs to be automatically assumed to be unable or unwilling to provide truthful and rational accounts. This was also evident in the findings from the contextual analysis (see chapter three). Further, participants spoke about having to always exercise considerable discretion in

relation to their use of illicit drugs, taking great care not to disclose this in certain relationships or in particular contexts for fear of being judged and discriminated. The process of engaging in conversations about their drug use—or more pertinently in conversations that encouraged open and in depth exploration of their experiences, feelings, and understandings which were then affirmed and validated—thus elicited a number of different reactions from participants.

Many participants took this as an opportunity to express discontentment, frustrations, and fears about the impacts of the current knowledges, laws, policies, and cultural stereotypes that produce illicit drug use and drug-using subjects in a variety of stigmatising and marginalising ways. For such participants, this approach to interviewing enabled rapport to be quickly established and easily maintained. A small number of participants however were reluctant to express deeper thoughts and feelings in relation to their drug use. These interactions and their ethical and conceptual implications will be discussed shortly. In the context of providing an overview of the process of intensive interviewing however, these interviews illustrated how the intensive style can be adapted in response to the participants' actions and reactions. Even in those interviews where participants were reluctant to more deeply explore their accounts, the capacity to adopt a reactive, sensitive, and respectful approach to interviewing (i.e., of being attuned in particular to the emotive processes taking place in each moment) was found to facilitate the development and maintenance of rapport.

These interviews thus show how the style of intensive interviewing can make available a somewhat different role for participants compared to more traditional styles. As Charmaz (2006) suggests, within the context of an intensive interview the interviewer is more responsive to the participants reactions, which thus facilitates a greater potential for participants to stipulate what is and is not discussed, and in how much or how little detail. Thus, although there will always remain some power difference in the researcher-participant dynamic, there is greater potential for this to be unsettled when an intensive approach is adopted (Dzidic, 2009). Given the extent to which what people who use illicit drugs have to say has been and continues to be “subjugated” (Moore, 2008, p. 354), the adoption of this method thus had ethical and political as well as methodological motives.

Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed shortly after it was conducted. Any identifying information provided throughout the interviews (such as names or places) was changed in the transcriptions. In keeping with the iterative-generative-

reflective process adopted throughout this research, I undertook all transcription myself. There was substantial analytic value derived during the transcription process as this required very close and repeated engagement with the texts. As Charmaz (2006) explains,

Studying your data prompts you to learn nuances of your research participants' language and meanings. Subsequently, you learn to define the directions where your data can take you. Through studying interview audiotapes, for example, you attend closely to your respondents' feelings and views. They will live in your mind as you listen carefully over and over to what they were saying (p. 34).

4.3 Ethical considerations

In the development of this research one of the primary ethical concerns was protecting the participants' anonymity. One reason for this was the concern that participants were being asked to disclose involvement in an illegal activity. More pertinently however, this issue was prioritised due to the risk of harm in the form of increased stigma and marginalisation. Thus it was in the interest of prioritising such concerns that the method of single interviews was adopted. Knox and Burkard (2009) enjoin researchers to consider the costs and benefits when making decisions regarding the issue of conducting multiple interviews with participants. The costs of capturing only a 'snapshot' of participants' realities and experiences were weighed against ethical concerns regarding initiating further contact with participants. Critically however this issue became somewhat redundant as the data collection and analysis progressed, as the complexity of the data that emerged in these single interactions with participants signified that sufficient information had been yielded from this single interview methodology to meaningfully address the research objectives.

The practice of conducting intensive interviews requires careful consideration of ethics. As mentioned, it was apparent that a small number of participants found the deeper approach to exploration of what they had to say that an intensive interviewing approach facilitates uncomfortable. For example, one participant requested to "pass" when asked certain questions (particularly those relating to her sense of self and the way she is treated by others). Consistent with the call for researchers to engage in an "'adapt as you go along' methodological approach" (Patton, 2000, p. 1363) not just in response to practical constraints or conceptual issues but most especially in response to ethical considerations (Havercamp, 2005), I responded to the emergence of such discomfort by reverting back to a less intensive interviewing style. The adoption of such an approach throughout the

interviews is consonant with Charmaz's (2004) observation that researchers need to navigate the fine balance between letting interviews "take on a momentum of their own" (Gray, 2010, p. 690) in order to create an open, non-directive, and relaxed setting that is conducive to eliciting the participants' meanings and realities whilst simultaneously ensuring that one remains active in shaping the content and direction of the interview in response to what is stated and what is observed. As Kvale (1994) identifies, qualitative interviews should prioritise being attuned with what is being produced in interaction with the participant over the notion of methodological consistency.

Another ongoing ethical concern was the potential for my skills and experience as a practicing psychologist resulting in me traversing the boundary of my role as a researcher during the interviews. As mentioned previously, the intensive interviewing style shares more in common with the therapeutic process than conversational interviews. As Knox and Burkard (2009) discuss, qualitative psychotherapy researchers "tread a sometimes difficult line between interviewer and therapist" (p. 1). They thus recommend the use of pilot interviews, regular review of the research protocol, debriefing after interviews, role-plays, and listening to recordings of more experienced interviewers as strategies that increase the competence of therapeutic practitioners in conducting research interviews. The first three of these measures were thus adopted to guard against this risk of my interactions with participants traversing into the realm of therapeutic interaction. Further, Moyle (2002) emphasises the importance of being transparent about the differences between therapeutic and research-oriented interactions, referencing in particular the degree to which the outcomes of these two interactions diverge:

It is imperative that participants are reminded that the relationship is one of research and not therapy, even though they may find that telling their story is therapeutic. There is a fine line between the nature of the intimate relationship that is created when qualitative researchers are privy to participants' stories and seek clinical understanding, and the interest created by participants' desire for a therapeutic relationship. Researchers must discuss the issue of professional and agency boundaries. Participants need to be informed that the researcher is representing an agency outside the hospital (in this case a university) and that the information they discuss may not assist their recovery (Wing 1999). Thus, the data will not be converted into an advantage to patients in the short term (Moyle, 2002, p. 272).

Consistent with this, there were numerous occasions throughout the interviews where these issues were explicitly discussed with participants.

Critically however, one boundary that was traversed was that between researcher and advocate. I would argue however that this was in keeping with the nature of the research. Although those moments when these two roles co-occurred throughout the interviews were not explicitly planned, an interest in acting as an advocate for people who use illicit drugs clearly underpinned this research from its very conception (see Introduction) through to its conclusion (see chapter eight). Importantly however, consistent with what Moyle (2002) emphasises, I was clear with participants that although an interest in advocacy was central to this research, the collection of data, and to how I would present the findings, the outcomes of this research would be limited to the potential to generate further discussion about the concerns raised rather than having the capacity to directly bring into effect meaningful changes in those areas of concern for participants. Importantly, this traversal of the roles of researcher and advocate fits with the poststructuralist frame of this research, which problematises the notion that all other roles can or *should be* suspended when conducting research (Atkinson, 2001; Lavis, 2010).

Overall however, the approach I took to negotiating these multiple boundaries when conducting the interviews is summated in Charmaz's (2004) observation that:

Respecting our research participants means acknowledging and honoring their fundamental humanity. It means treating people with dignity when we do not condone their beliefs and actions. It also means searching for their meanings and understanding their actions as they see them, not according to our philosophical or professional perspectives. It can mean temporarily abandoning our researcher role. Occasionally, I have validated people in unscientific ways. For example, when a young man who was depleted by dialysis berated himself for not getting enough done, I told him that I thought he accomplished a great deal (p. 985).

Thus, as Haverkamp (2005) puts it, "what makes research 'ethical' is not a characteristic of the design or procedures, but of our individual decisions, actions, relationships, and commitments" (p. 147). I firmly believe therefore that what was central to making this research ethical was not only the extent to which I endeavoured to ensure that the decisions I made, the actions I took, and the relationships I formed were based on the acknowledgement and honouring of the participants' "fundamental humanity", but it was also my commitment to this objective as the very reason for conducting this research.

4.4 Analytic framework: Causal Layered Analysis

Agar (2002) states that “the creative use of available material” is just as crucial to qualitative research in the field of AOD research as is “newly gathered data”, suggesting that “we are less in need of new data and more in need of new ideas” (p. 257). Although this research did involve the collection and analysis of new data, the notion of creatively engaging with the data in order to generate new ideas was considered a priority. That is, in keeping with the overarching research objective of generating new questions about what works and does not work in how illicit drug use is accounted for in Australian culture, it was considered important to employ an analytic framework which would allow me to engage with the data in a manner that was creative and sufficiently distinct from previous analyses of qualitative interviews with people who use illicit drugs. The analytic methodology described below is consistent with these intentions.

Originating from the work of futurist studies, and pulling together numerous deconstructive approaches, the analytic framework of Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) is a poststructuralist methodology which scrutinises the varied ways a particular problem or phenomenon is produced from different vantage points, or layers of knowing (Inayatullah, 1998, 2004). Aiming “to disturb present power relations through making problematic our categories and evoking other places”, it is a unique methodology through which alternative solutions, futures, categories, etc. can be envisaged (Inayatullah, 1998, p. 388). In focusing on producing understandings of a problem that are inclusive of different ways of knowing, Bishop et al. (2013) see CLA as being especially useful in examining issues and phenomena that historically have been decontextualized—that is, problems which have failed to be considered in their full complexity. Indeed, they argue that in assisting researchers to better “contend with social complexity, and to deconstruct social issues in their full” CLA enables researchers to produce findings that establish sounder foundations and opportunities for social change (Bishop et al., 2013, p. 10). As Dzidic (2009) explains, this is because CLA

poses a different paradigm for conceptualising in depth the complexity of study scenarios. Scenarios are analysed according to four different yet interconnected layers. The layers force the researcher to consider the research scenarios according to different parameters of foci. Doing so encourages a process that attempts to get to the root of the research scenario (pp. 50-51).

Thus, this requirement that data be deconstructed according to four vertically structured layers, which formulate multiple ways of knowing as varying in terms of depth and

perceptibility, makes CLA a valuable and unique deconstructive tool; one which, importantly, is specifically geared towards the objective of change.

Given its emphasis on the disruption of existing power relations and categories of thought in order to make possible alternative configurations of an issue, CLA was thus considered to be particularly suited to the overarching research objectives. Indeed, in providing a poststructuralist format for analysing data in deep and expansive ways in the interest of generating a fuller comprehension of the complexity of an issue, the layered framework of CLA was considered a valuable tool for exploring the mess of divergent and disjunctive ways in which illicit drug use is accounted for. In this section, I introduce the four layers that make up the framework, discuss the importance of the expansive analytic gaze that CLA engenders, and outline the conceptual and practical steps involved in conducting the analyses.

4.4.1 The layers: From more visible to less visible ways of knowing

The framework of CLA is made up of four layers, each of which is understood to correspond with different ways of knowing about an issue or a problem (Inayatullah, 1998, 2004). These layers are structured vertically (see Figure 1). However, as discussed later, this structuring is not intended to denote a hierarchy of importance. Rather, it is intended to denote varying levels of visibility of perceptibility. Inayatullah (1998) uses the metaphor of an iceberg to describe this structuring, capturing the notion that certain ways of knowing about/constructing the world are more obvious and visible (as with the tip of an iceberg which protrudes above the water), whilst others are less obvious and visible (as with the bulk of the iceberg which remains submerged).

The first of the layers, litany, constitutes the most visible and superficial ways of knowing. Problems or phenomena are understood here in automatic, accepted, and unquestioned terms. Such knowledges tend to take the form of stereotyped, exaggerated statements made in public contexts, such as in the media. At the second layer, socio-structural practices, problems and phenomena are considered outcomes of social and institutional factors. The understandings produced at this level see problems and phenomena as products of explicit and structured social, technological, economic, environmental, and political processes. Knowledges at this level thus tend to be formed in fixed and quantifiable rather than critical terms, such as in the form of legal, scientific, or policy documents. As these socio-structural knowledges are uncritical, they operate to support the superficial knowledges at the litany level. The third layer, worldview/discourse,

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moves into the domain of more critical, less overt ways of knowing. At this level, problems and phenomena are not seen in fixed and uncritical terms but rather the meanings ascribed are understood to be constructed by the discourses operating in the culture at that time. Understandings of a problem or phenomenon at this level are thus seen to be contingent on the particular practices of meaning-making that are activated. The final layer, myth/metaphor, constitutes the deepest, least conscious, and hence least visible ways of knowing. Understandings at this level tend to be emotive and image-based. These knowledges constitute stories, myths, or metaphors which tell us in a preconscious manner what to make of a problem or phenomenon; these forms of knowledge tend to be *felt* rather than thought about.

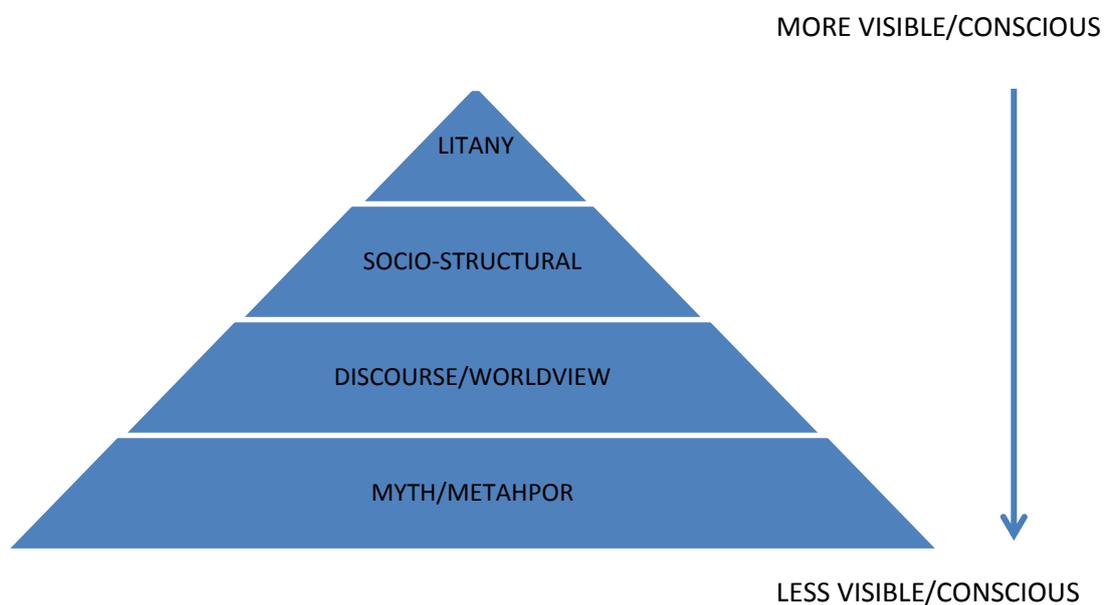


Figure 1. Causal Layered Analysis levels

For Inayatullah (1998, 2004), it is through the analysis of all four ways of knowing about or constructing a problem that the researcher can develop the fullest understanding of the issue or problem being examined. The uniqueness of CLA thus lies in its insistence on including as many possible ways of knowing into the analytic frame. Indeed, in prompting researchers to systematically attend to a fuller and deeper range of constructions, CLA ensures that those ways of knowing which are often overlooked (e.g., litanies) or unseen (e.g., myths/metaphors) are included (Bishop et al., 2013). Given the concerns regarding the persistent lack of change in the shortcomings in how the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are constructed, this potential for CLA to make visible aspects of the problem that often remain unattended to provided a strong rationale for the adoption of this layered approach to analysing the interview data.

4.4.2 An expansive gaze: Privileging voice and generating richness

The structure of CLA resembles that of other analytic approaches widely applied in critical social research, such as conditional matrices (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and nested systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Its components are likewise familiar, such as the analysis of worldviews in community psychology (Bishop et al., 2002; Dokecki, 1996; Sarason, 1982) and of metaphors by critical social theorists (Fraser & valentine, 2009; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Weimer, 2003). As noted, however, the uniqueness of CLA resides in the way that it “acts as a structure for pulling together multiple analytic methods, where typically analysis may only focus on one of these” (Dzidic, 2009, p. 53). In layering rather than isolating these different methods, CLA expands upon existing deconstructive approaches by adding depth, and therefore richness, to the analytic process and its outcomes (Bishop, et al., 2013; Wildman, 2002). CLA thus is valued for its potential to expand the analytic gaze; making it more inclusive and expansive in comparison to other deconstructive methodologies. In the context of the current research, a more expansive analytic gaze was valued for two reasons.

Most importantly, the inclusive and expansive nature of CLA was considered to be consistent with the objective of privileging the voice of participants. By examining the interviews through multiple analytic lenses, this approach maximised the potential for the numerous, layered things that participants had to say, as well as what they did not say, about the mess of divergent and disjunctive accounts of illicit drug use to be ‘heard’. Indeed, the expanded gaze this method facilitated forced me to consider the range of participants’ appraisals and experiences in relation to this mess—from those that were quite explicit and straightforward to those that were less conscious and more complex. As Inayatullah (1998, 2004) predicts, doing so proved to be particularly valuable.

In particular, the layered approach to analysing the interview data highlighted that there was variance in voice not only between participant accounts but within them; each participant voiced a number of different, and sometimes contradictory, appraisals of the mess of divergent and disjunctive accounts. Rather than limiting the analysis to one or two dimensions of such voice, therefore, the use of CLA made it possible to attend to not only the breadth of voice (i.e., between participants) but the depth of it (i.e., within participants). Furthermore, Inayatullah (2004) argues it is the addition of the myth/metaphor layer which makes CLA particularly valuable as an alternative deconstructive approach, as this less conscious voice or reality is often excluded in critical analyses which do not take the analytic gaze beyond the level of worldview/discourse. Consistent with this, attending to these un-articulable and less conscious dimensions of the

interview data allowed important findings to emerge, as this ensured that less explicit aspects of what the participants' voiced (including what they did not/could not voice) were examined. Not only did this lead to the emergence of the most significant findings, but also, as Jaeger and Rosnow (1988) stress social researchers must aim to do, it assisted me to analyse and interpret the interview data in a manner that did justice to the multiple ways in which participants related to their multiple realities.

In addition to the way that the methodology of CLA facilitated greater privileging of the participants' voice, this approach was also considered valuable for its capacity to produce rich data and therefore to contribute to the trustworthiness of the research findings. As discussed in chapter two, the practice of triangulation was a key element used to establish the trustworthiness of the findings. Of value therefore was the fact that this practice of triangulation is inherent to the process of conducting CLA, in which the same instance of data is viewed several times, with each time potentially producing a different piece of information about that instance (Bishop et al., 2013) (see below for further explanation). Such triangulation is an important tool in determining trustworthiness because it ensures that the analytic output is rich enough to develop adequate understandings (Barbour, 2001). Thus the richness that inherently emerges through the method of CLA means that this analytic approach lends itself well to the development of fuller and more adequate understandings (Bishop et al., 2013; Inayatullah, 2004).

Demonstrative of this was the substantial and rich catalogue of information that each level of analysis produced. This is evident in the level of detail that is provided in chapters five, six and seven, in which the findings are presented. Importantly, by engaging in the process of coding the data according to the four layers concurrently rather than sequentially, these separate, yet connected catalogues were pulled together to form a holistic understanding of the data—of the mess, and what participants made of it—in which the interconnectedness of the layers is emphasised. As is explained further below, this holistic approach lies at the heart of CLA's uniqueness and value, as it encourages each level of analysis to be considered in relation to each other in order to form an overall story that is inclusive of these multiple layers of knowing.

4.4.2 Analysis in practice

Before outlining the procedure of CLA, it is important to note that the approach I took departed somewhat from the method as described by Inayatullah (1998, 2004). Typically, CLA is employed to analyse and tease apart "seemingly simple problems,

processes, or settings, with the aims of understanding and appreciating their complexity” (Dzidic, 2009, p. 52). However, in conducting this research my concern was with the exploration of a ‘problem’ that is steeped in complexity. Indeed, *the object of my inquiry was this complexity*, or this mess. CLA was thus applied as a way of structuring the exploration of this mess, as it is seen and experienced by a group of people who use illicit drugs. Rather than applying the methodology of CLA as Inayatullah (1998, 2004) describes it, therefore, CLA was applied in a metaphorical rather than literal manner. That is, CLA was used to provide an analytic structure for teasing apart how participants saw and made sense of this mess according to multiple ways of knowing.

This meant that the conceptual process I adopted varied somewhat from that envisaged by Inayatullah (1998, 2004). Specifically, rather than setting out to identify how illicit drug use is made knowable or real at each level of analysis, I aimed to examine *what the participants had to say about the ways in which the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are made knowable (i.e., are constructed) through these four different ways of knowing*. Importantly, then, consistent with Inayatullah’s (1998) methodology, the process of analysis thus remained one of “sorting...in vertical layers, from the most obvious litany to the deeper metaphorical layers” (p. 389). What was coded, however, was coded was what the participants had to say about how they and their conduct are constructed through a) the most exterior, automatic ways of knowing (litany), b) more structured and formal ways of knowing (socio-structural), c) discursive ways of knowing (worldview/discourse), and d) less conscious, more emotive ways of knowing (myth/metaphor). As noted however, despite this conceptual variation, the methodological components that are central to the framework were retained. Importantly therefore, the procedure I followed (detailed below) and the findings that emerged can still be considered to be consistent with framework of CLA.

4.4.1.1 Procedure

The analytic procedure of CLA does not differ to other qualitative analyses in which extensive interpretation of transcribed data occurs through reading and coding of the text. However, when conducting CLA the coding and interpretation occurs according to the different lenses. As Bishop and colleagues (2013) put it, “conducting a CLA requires a first step of deconstructing an issue according to the specified layers of Litany, Social Causal, Worldview/Discourse and Myth/Metaphor, followed by an in-depth thematic analysis within each Causal Layer” (p. 7). The analysis thus involved reading, coding and interpreting each of the interview transcripts four different times – once for each of the four levels.

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Following this, the themes that emerged at each level of analysis were collated and interpreted.

As Dzidic (2009) writes, this method,

aims to make for a 'deeper' and more holistic interpretation of the data, much like a microscope where lenses of different strength are adopted to look at the same article but according to different intensities. Each lens/layer reveals a different piece of information about the article being considered. The significance of having multiple lenses/layers is that each provide information regarding the article of interest where no one lens is superior to the other and where the power of the approach comes from the collective story gained from interpretation of the one article according to all of the levels (p. 53; see also Bishop et al., 2013).

Consistent with what Bishop et al. (2013), Gridley (2005), and Wildman (2002) describe, therefore, the coding of the transcripts was an iterative rather than linear process. This entailed analysing transcripts concurrently rather than sequentially. Further, rather than privileging any one level over another, the intent of CLA is to focus "on the interaction and complexity within and between the layers of analysis" (Dzidic, 2009, p. 50). Thus as well as concentrating on what the participants had to say about the different ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects, the analysis involved moving up and down between the layers to examine the relationship between these different ways of knowing. This made it possible to generate a more holistic understanding of the ways in which the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are constructed and of the effects of these constructions. Critically, consistent with Dzidic's (2009) observation, it was this process of moving up and down the layers, reflecting on their interconnectedness, which generated the most instructive findings. Indeed, the most informative and powerful outcomes of this research would not have emerged had I not undertaken this process of moving up and down between the different ways of knowing in order to generate a more holistic understanding of what the participants had to say. These more in-depth and holistic findings are introduced in chapter seven (which presents the findings from the myth/metaphor level) and are expanded upon in chapter eight. Chapter five presents the findings from the levels of litany and socio-structural conditions, and chapter six presents those from the level of worldview/discourse.

Chapter Five

5. Exterior and socio-structural constructions: Incontestable and unavoidable otherness

In this chapter I present the findings from the first two levels of analysis – litany and socio-structural conditions. The participants spoke about both these ways of knowing as producing the same inadequate, stigmatising, and marginalising understandings of and approaches to their conduct and subjectivities. What the participants had to say about the most exterior, automatic ways in which they and their drug use are constructed concerned the extent to which these position them in terms of deviance and disorder and thus have the effect of undermining their eligibility to be seen and treated as full citizens. They expressed similar concerns about the way that more structured ways of knowing construct what they do and who they are; describing how formal and informal social and regulatory structures construct them in terms of deviance and disorder and bring into effect marked exclusion. These two sets of findings are thus presented together as they were shown to operate in a complementary fashion, with the same constructions of otherness occurring in routine and automatic as well as structured and authoritative ways.

5.1 Litany: Automatically, incontestably other

According to the definition of litany provided by Inayatullah (1998, 2004), our most superficial understandings are those which are recited tediously and repetitively in a manner that does not invite debate or critical thinking but instead generates the same formulaic responses time and time again. The litany of an issue, therefore, constitutes how at a broad social level we automatically come to know about and respond to a given problem or situation and hence refers to those most stereotyped and archetypal ways of knowing. The first level of analysis was thus concerned with exploring the participants' take on the most automatic, familiar, unquestioned ways in which they and their illicit drug use are constructed.

According to the participants, the most automatic, superficial constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are those which establish such conduct and subjectivities as necessarily deviant and/or disordered in some way. Indeed, as one participant put it, they clearly saw the most exterior ways of knowing as making a connection between the acts and/or subjects of illicit drug use and marked otherness an automatic, uncontested “assumed thing” (Lucy³). Unsurprisingly therefore, the participants objected to these ways of knowing; problematising the inadequate understandings of their conduct and

³ Pseudonyms are used for all participants.

subjectivities that they produce and expressing concern about the way that such constructions result in them being seen and treated in deeply stigmatising and marginalising ways. This chapter thus details the two key themes that emerged in what the participants had to say about the most exterior ways of knowing: the way that they a) unfoundedly construct their conduct and subjectivities as automatically and uncontestedly other and b) establish an ineligibility to be seen and treated as valid subjects or citizens.

Before detailing these findings, I introduce the participants' take on these ways of knowing with the words of two participants. When talking about his use of amphetamines Max stated that:

People always look down on it (pause). It's like a Christian - it's either their way or the highway. And it is hard (...) 'cause they don't understand.

He thus spoke about the most common responses people he encounters in his life make in relation to his illicit drug use as constructing such conduct in terms of otherness (i.e., as somehow bad or undesirable). In addition to emphasising that these constructions reflect and produce poor understandings of the realities of his conduct and subjectivity, he also problematised the way that such constructions are put forth as though they are absolute and incontestable. Lee also spoke about assumptions of otherness as making up the automatic response people make in relation to illicit drug use and likewise emphasised the incontestability of these misunderstandings:

Everyone always sees you as a junkie or untrustworthy (pause). It affects your confidence when you go anywhere or do anything and they're like "oh, she's abusing drugs". Like, hmm well why do I even bother? I think it will always be that stereotype, what everybody has as a basis for why we are the way we are.

Importantly therefore, as well as problematising the inadequate and uncontested nature of these exterior constructions, Lee also expressed concern about the way that she is treated in stigmatising and marginalising ways because of such constructions. Indeed, in speaking about the way that such constructions undermine the credibility of what she has to say (leaving her wondering if she should "even bother" to try and be heard) she problematised about the way that these exterior ways of knowing construct her as a less valid subject. Both Max's and Lee's comments thus encapsulated the key concerns that emerged in what the participants had to say about the most exterior ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects; as they consistently spoke about such ways of knowing as producing automatic, incontestable and unwarranted charges of otherness through which

others come to see and treat them as ineligible subjects. These concerns fell under two key themes: Deviance and disorder and ineligible/non-citizens.

5.1.1 Deviance and disorder

It was clear when the participants spoke about the most exterior ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects that they saw them as automatically and uncontestedly constructing such conduct and subjects in terms of otherness. In particular, consistent with what constituted the most dominant ways of constructing illicit drug use and drug-using subjects in the contextual data, it was evident that the participants saw these ways of knowing as producing such conduct and subjects as markedly other in two key ways: as deviant and/or as disordered.

A common theme that emerged in what the participants had to say about the way that others most commonly, most automatically see and treat them was the imputation of deviance – of being bad or disreputable. At times these charges of deviance were quite general. Scott, for example, spoke about being automatically constructed as a disreputable or bad person for using illicit drugs:

...it's almost an assumption of us as well, that if you use drugs then... it's a uh... you're a, there's something, I don't know, you're not as good a person as you could be.

Likewise, Josh saw these most exterior ways of knowing (occurring in colleague's response to a discussion about ecstasy use) as automatically constructing him in ways that feel disreputable and shameful:

...he didn't actually say anything but he just made me feel really bad. Um, which kind of made me feel really, um I don't know, almost dirty you know?

At other times, participants spoke about being automatically and routinely seen and treated as deviant in more specific ways. As Lee stated:

...if you do tell anybody you're a drug user they think you've got hep C or you're going to rip them off.

Like Scott and Josh, Lee thus described being constructed as untrustworthy and as a risk to others, on the basis of her illicit drug use, in a manner that is so automatic that it seems incontestable. Likewise, Sam stated that she expects that others will automatically, unquestioningly see them her and her partner as irresponsible, harmful (i.e., 'bad') parents because of their cannabis use:

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You think, 'oh god if [they knew]', you know, I don't want people thinking that you know my kids are disadvantaged or, you know, that's probably the biggest thing, you know? Just 'oh god', you know, 'do they think we neglect the kids?' Or, you know... because that's what I straight away jump down to, you know?

Thus, it was quite clear that the participants saw the most exterior ways of knowing about illicit drug use as routinely, automatically, and thus incontestably constructing their conduct and subjectivities according to the same basic formula: illicit drug use/illicit drug-using subjects equal bad behaviour/bad people.

Indeed, the participants spoke about these exterior ways of knowing as constructing the acts and subjects of illicit drug use in ways that make such conduct and subjectivity “a black mark against your name” (Hamish). They thus problematised the way that these constructions define them on the basis of their use of illicit drugs. That is, they expressed concern about the way that these automatic, uncontested constructions of otherness operate to insist that they are identified or knowable solely in terms of this conduct and the otherness attached to it. Blake, for example, described these automatic, uncontested constructions as operating in a way that is akin to being solely defined as someone who “plays sport”; emphasising that unlike the implications of being defined as a sport player, the implications of being defined solely according to one’s use of illicit drugs are deeply stigmatising and marginalising, as it is not only a “superficial” but a deeply “judgemental” way of seeing them. Thus he spoke about these exterior ways of knowing as producing understandings of and approaches to people who use illicit drugs that are “not fair to them” because in addition to misrepresenting who and what they are, they bring into effect significant stigma and marginalisation.

Alongside the formula of illicit drug use/illicit drug-using subjects equal bad behaviour/bad people, the participants also saw the most exterior ways of knowing about such conduct and subjectivities as automatically and uncontestably constructing what they do and who they are according to the formula of illicit drug use/illicit drug-using subjects equal dysfunctional behaviour/dysfunctional people. Lucy’s description of what she sees as most commonly and automatically associated with the term ‘drug user’ provided a comprehensive overview of the varying imputations of dysfunction through which such conduct and subjectivities are constructed terms of otherness:

Lucy: (...) in my mind it seems that smoking a joint makes me a drug user, with ALL the things that go with that (...)

Laura: what does go along with being labelled a drug user? Or with that kind of label coming up in your mind, what goes along with that?

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Lucy: um, (long pause) in a general sense, you know, someone who hasn't got their shit together I guess, being a tragic character almost, sense of impending doom. Um, seems like it's almost quite a self-indulgent space to be at. And I feel like there's a growing acceptance now that most people from late adolescence through to mid- twenties have a phase where they're all dabbling and using drugs to different degrees. But then you're supposed to grow out of it. Um, I feel like the stories of people who don't manage to quite grow out of it... mm I don't know... yeah it's like it's a youthful self-indulgent phase that, uh, no respected and respectful upstanding citizen would persevere with (...) and if you do then something's gone wrong and you're not quite right.

Lucy thus saw the most exterior was of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects as automatically and uncontestedly constructing her conduct and subjectivity as dysfunctional (i.e., “not quite right”) in numerous ways – as chaotic (e.g., “someone who hasn't got their shit together”), troubled (e.g., “a tragic character”), undisciplined (e.g., “self-indulgent”), disreputable (e.g., not a “respected and respectful upstanding citizen”), and hopeless (e.g., “impending doom”). She expanded upon this when asked about why the experience of developing “a need” for methamphetamine was something she felt was “shameful”; stating that:

It seems like it's an assumed thing. Um, knowing what other people's reactions would be I guess, based on what we were talking about before, all of those assumptions that go with a drug user (...) Um yeah... so where does the shame come from? (long pause) I think just all of those different stories that are attached to the kind of person who gets themselves in that kind of situation...Lack of self-control or a sense of there being something fundamentally wrong... having issues that need to be worked through or... having fallen apart.

Lucy thus expressed concern about the expectation that the most automatic, routine and uncontested reactions from people to her use of various illicit drugs charge her with significant and intrinsic dysfunction or disorder – with having something “fundamentally wrong” with her.

This was also evident in the way that Bill and Hamish described being seen and treated as having no potential in life because of their illicit drug use. Bill, for example, noted that:

Some people, like, have the perception that, like, you're going to be a druggie for life. That you're never going to give up, that you're never going to have a normal life. They just kind of, you just kind of get written off almost, like, like that's who you are, that's what you're going to be.

He thus described being automatically and routinely seen and treated as incapable of normality because of his use of illicit drugs (i.e., as incapable of the capacity to “have a

normal life” and hence of the capacity to be normal). Importantly he spoke about such exterior ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects as having the powerful implication of producing such dysfunction or disorder (i.e., such otherness) as irrevocable. Hamish likewise spoke about the powerful and pervasive effects of the automatic, uncontested constructions of both deviance and disorder that come out of such exterior and routinized ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects. Indeed, he described how the marked, familiar, and uncontested nature of such constructions of otherness makes the notion of the “lost cause druggie” something “nobody is immune to”. Thus, like Bill who spoke about such constructions as establishing the grounds for individuals who use illicit drugs to be “written off” as interminably bad and/or dysfunctional, Hamish also spoke about charges of intractable otherness as automatic and incontestable.

It was clear therefore that participants felt concerned about the extent to which the most exterior ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects automatically and routinely construct what they do and who they are in inadequate, inappropriate ways. In particular, they expressed concern about the extent to which such constructions position the acts and subjects of illicit drug use as so markedly, fully and irrevocably other. Importantly however, in addition to this they expressed concern about the way that the well-rehearsed nature of these charges of otherness means that stigmatising and marginalising understandings and approaches to illicit drug use come to be taken for granted.

5.1.2 Ineligible/non-citizens

Importantly, the second key theme that emerged in what the participants had to say about the way that these exterior ways of knowing construct illicit drug use and drug-using subjects was that such automatic, uncontested constructions of deviance and disorder establish the drug-using subject as different in ways that produce a diminished or non-existent eligibility to be seen and treated as full or eligible citizens. Indeed, the participants were shown to problematise these ways of knowing not just because of the way that they mark them and their conduct as fully, irrevocably other but also because of the way that such constructions of otherness establish the grounds for people who use illicit drugs to be seen as unable or unwilling to meet the obligations of citizenship and thus to be treated as unentitled to or undeserving of the rights of such citizenship (see Hindess 2002 for discussion of such obligations and rights).

As discussed in the introduction Rance et al. (2012), drawing on Fricker (2007), explain how people who use illicit drugs are subject to “epistemic insults” in and through which their credibility as “knowers” comes to be undermined (p. 249) which often occurs in the way that such individuals are deemed incapable of providing credible accounts of what they do and who they are (Moore, 2008; Rance & Treloar, 2015; Tutenges, Kolind, & Uhl, 2015). Consistent with this, it was clear that the participants saw such insults as one of the key implications of having their conduct and subjectivities so automatically, uncontestedly constructed in terms of deviance and disorder. A powerful example of this was Helen’s description of the way that staff at a metropolitan health service dismissed her accounts of her mental health and drug use:

I had lots of students come and see me. That was in 2001. The students were better than the fully qualified (laughing). They were all willing to listen and all had little things that – Like, the fully qualified they didn’t want to give a stuff about you, but the, the junior girls, not the junior girls, the LEARNING girls, they were all wanting to figure out what it was that made people slip into psychosis in the first place and things like that. And when I kept saying ‘it’s called exhaustion’, THEY listened. The rest of the staff didn’t. So it made it really difficult. They were like ‘oh god, not again, I’ve heard this story before’.

Thus in conveying how her accounts were so automatically, unquestioningly dismissed, Helen spoke about being seen and treated as unwilling or unable to provide valid and reliable information. In particular, she spoke about the way that the automatic, uncontested assumption that people who use illicit drugs (and potentially also people who have a mental illness) will all tell the same old “story” established the grounds for her to be seen and treated as lacking credibility and thus as ineligible to take part in her treatment the same ways that normative subjects are permitted (and expected – see Lupton, 1995) to. Lee was even more explicit in describing how such ways of knowing impact how she is seen and treated in health settings:

Well, as soon as they find out that I’m a drug user they always assume that I’ve got hep C, which I don’t. And like when I go, ‘I don’t have hep C’ they go ‘oh bull. You’re a drug user, you’ve been a drug user for 10 years’.

She thus spoke about being routinely seen and treated as being incapable of or unwilling to provide credible information about her health and her drug-using practices. Indeed, she spoke about being routinely seen and treated as being someone who either actively lies about their health and injecting practices or as someone who is incapable of accurate monitoring of their physical health and/or of engaging in safe injecting practices – positions which are clearly the product of the automatic, uncontested construction of the drug-using subjects as fully, irrevocably deviant and/or disordered.

Thus, the participants saw automatic, uncontested constructions of deviance and disorder as not only resulting in them being seen and treated as unentitled to the same courtesies as other patients (i.e., being listened to and believed), but as also excluding them from the eligibility to be seen and treated as capable of legitimately and effectively participating in their own health care. Importantly therefore they spoke about exterior ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects as not only producing deeply stigmatising and marginalising understandings and approaches but as also bringing into effect significant disenfranchisement. Ultimately, then, participants saw the upshot of being constructed in ways that establish such ineligibility to be seen and treated as full citizens is that the individual comes to be seen and treated as “a lesser human being” (Rance et al., 2012, p. 249).

Consistent with this, the participants also expressed concern about the dehumanisation that automatic, uncontested constructions of deviance and disorder generate. A moving example of this was Scott’s discussion of the way that such automatic, uncontested otherness can disqualify the drug-using subject from basic human regard:

...one of my football mates got shot over a drug debt. And, you know, it was really sad, he was a really popular guy, everyone really liked him. But my nanna, this is what my nanna said to me: ‘that’s what everyone’s forgetting’ - ‘cause it was over a drug debt that he got shot – [she said] ‘everyone’s forgetting that he was a drug addict. Like, he wasn’t, everyone’s saying what a great guy he was, but everyone’s forgetting that he’s a drug addict, you know’. That’s what she actually said and, you know, I uh, he was one of my good mates, we played football for 10 years, and that’s just how she passed it off, she was like ‘it’s not that sad, he was a drug addict’.

He thus spoke about the way that automatic, uncontested and sweeping connections between the act of drug use and disreputable subjectivities can, often harshly, preclude people who use illicit drugs from the most basic rights one can expect as a member of the moral community (Opotow, 2001). In this case, he saw the automatic, uncontested formula of illicit drug use equals disrepute as establishing the drug-using subject as undeserving of the right to be mourned; a charge which meant that his friend was seen and treated as not only less deserving, less valued, or less legitimate than others, but ultimately as less human than others.

Thus a key theme that characterised what the participants had to say about these exterior ways of knowing about their conduct and subjectivities concerned the way that the realities of their conduct and subjectivities are invalidated by such automatic, uncontested constructions of total, irrevocable otherness. When asked about the experience of having

her drug use understood in ways that automatically impute some kind of deviance and/or disorder, Lucy said:

I guess that's quite shaming when someone comes in and does that, quite invalidating.

She thus described how, by making constructions of deviance and disorder the only knowable or valid ways of understanding and approaching illicit drug use and drug-using subjects, these exterior ways of knowing cancel out the realities of what she does and who she is. As Scott put it, this means that his peers sometimes see him as “just the guy who takes pills” rather than “the guy who plays footy, goes to uni, and has a girlfriend”. For Hamish it means that he is typically constructed as “a druggie” for using cannabis daily, with the function of this behaviour (i.e., “to cope with other things”) made not just irrelevant but invalid. Thus, in making such comments the participants seemed to not only raise concerns about the inadequacies of the understandings and approaches these exterior ways of knowing produce (i.e., because they do not correspond with the realities of their drug use and subjectivities), but also seemed to voice concern about the way that automatic, uncontested constructions of deviance and disorder rule out or disqualify the realities of what they do and who they are. Once again therefore the theme of ineligibility—of diminished credibility, validity, legitimacy, diminished citizenship, and ultimately diminished humanity—emerged as central to what the participants saw as arising from the most exterior ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects. And critically, as another of Lucy’s comments highlights, the automatic, uncontested nature of these constructions and hence of their effects meant that the participants were in some respects resigned to them as an unavoidable reality:

a lot of the times for me the sense of distress around my drug use comes from a mismatch between my own experience of, yeah, my own experience and the interpretations or meanings that broader social cultural explanations put on my experience (...) it's like I'm being told I can't trust my own experience or something. Or that the meaning I make of it is not valid, because what society tells me I should be making of it is so powerful and so, like, generally accepted it takes a lot of strength and self-trust to say 'actually, you know what...', 'cause it means potentially being labelled a deviant or a fuck-up... and just having to wear that.

It is important to acknowledge here that the participants did not see these automatic, uncontested constructions of deviance and disorder as the *only* way of knowing about such conduct and subjects. In discussing her experiences in hospital, for example, Helen spoke about the way that the students’ keenness to learn operated to override the

automatic assumption that what she has to say is of no credibility or value. Likewise, in his discussion of his Nanna's dehumanising response to his friend's death, Scott contrasted her response with the way that those people who had known his friend saw his drug use as only one aspect of his life and identity, rather than as the sole attribute/behaviour which determined his value and worth, or indeed his very humanness. Understandably, it was these other kinds of constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects—made possible via less automatic, more deliberate ways of knowing—which the participants talked about most frequently throughout the interviews. However, before discussing these alternative constructions (see chapter six), I present the findings from the second level of analysis, which showed that the participants did not see such charges of deviance and disorder as solely the product of these exterior ways of knowing, but that they likewise problematised the way that more structured ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects also construct their conduct and subjectivities in terms of deviance and disorder. In particular, they problematised the way such socio-structural ways of knowing likewise make charges of otherness and ineligibility something that, on one level, they “just hav[e] to wear” as a consequence of their use of illicit drugs.

5.2 Socio-structural: Defined and regulated as other

Sometimes, our sciences create kinds of people that in a certain sense did not exist before. I call this ‘making up people’ (Hacking, 2006, p. 23).

Through the second analytic lens I explored the participants' take on more structured, measurable, and quantifiable ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects. Such constructions constitute those that are produced via social, legal, economic, political, environmental structures and practices (Inayatullah, 1998, 2004). For participants, it was a concern with the way that legal, medical, social and spatial structures construct their conduct and subjectivities which most consistently emerged in what they had to say. Indeed, they frequently problematised such structures and practices for categorising, recording, regulating, stratifying, and organising what they do and who they are in ways that mark and exclude them as other. In particular, they spoke about these ways of knowing as producing structural and social conditions which make constructions of deviance and disorder, and hence practices of exclusion and disenfranchisement, something that cannot be avoided. Overall therefore, the participants were shown to problematise these more structured ways of knowing for the way that they more formally establish these inadequate, stigmatising, and marginalising constructions of their conduct and subjectivities.

5.2.1 Legal and medical structures: Making up deviance and disorder

As discussed in chapter one, it was only with the introduction of certain legal practices and structures that the very notions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects came to exist (Berridge & Edwards, 1981; Cooper, 2004; Manderson, 1993; Reith, 2004). Thus it is through these practices and structures (which prohibit the manufacture, distribution, possession, and consumption of certain substances) that certain acts and subjects come to be constructed in terms of misconduct and illegitimacy, whilst others remain more sanctioned and legitimised (Manderson, 1993). Similarly, numerous critical writers have shown how the practices of science and medicine have the effect of “creating” or “making up” (Hacking, 2006, p. 23; see also Fraser & valentine, 2009; Mol & Law, 2002) certain kinds of subjects. Fraser (2010b), for example, describes how “contemporary medical approaches generate new ‘problematic persons’ – those failing to enact proper responsibility and self-sufficiency” (p. 554). Thus critical work has shown how the structures of both law and medicine construct certain types of conduct and certain types of people as other. This process likewise emerged as the basis for what they participants had to say about the most structured ways of knowing. They frequently expressed concern about the way that legal and medical practices construct what they do and who they are as deviant and disordered, and do so in a way that makes such stigmatising and marginalising understandings and approaches definitive and difficult to avoid. Indeed, they frequently problematised the ways that the legal and medical taxonomic structures and practices of definition, identification and monitoring require that on at least one level they be seen and treated in terms of deviance and disorder.

Some participants spoke directly about the way that certain legal practices make being defined and approached as an illicit drug user an indisputable reality. As Hamish described:

Well, I have a drug record, so I am a drug user, essentially (Laughing) so... It's all on file; the government knows that I am.

He thus saw the legal system's practice of keeping track of people's current and previous convictions as meaning that his status as “a drug user” is unequivocal. Indeed, he saw the practice of being publically and officially recorded as someone who uses illicit drugs as making the subjectivity of drug user something that he cannot contest:

The legality (...) has also shaped the way I've had to deal with it. I've had to be upfront about it, it has to be part of my identity, it is part of my identity now, its part of my legal identity.

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Importantly then, Hamish also problematised how such ways of knowing mean that he necessarily assumes the position of illicit drug user in certain situations; describing how this legal record has meant that he has had to identify himself as such (e.g., having to be “upfront” when stopped in his car by the police). What Hamish seemed to convey about these more structured ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects therefore was that they require him to assume a deviant subject position and to act accordingly.

Importantly however, it was clear that participants saw such legal structures and practices as prescribing unacceptable, undesirable subject positions even without having an official drug conviction. They frequently spoke about how the formal classification of particular substances as unsanctioned necessarily constructs the act of using them and those who take part in it deviant and illegitimate. Indeed, they spoke about the way that, by establishing what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable conduct, these ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects make it difficult to avoid being positioned in terms of deviance. As Lucy articulated, although the constructions and positions that these “laws and government policy” prescribe might be something she takes contention with, this does not mean that their effects are annulled:

I often feel guilty or conflicted around my weed use, and I wonder how much of that is because its ‘illicit’ (...) When I sit down rationally I, well I believe that’s an arbitrary distinction that’s completely based on our current laws and government policy (laughs) but it really affects me in terms of my day-to-day experience of myself.

This concern with the “arbitrary” way that such socio-structural conditions construct certain acts and subjects as normative and acceptable and others as deviant and unacceptable was something participants frequently expressed. In doing so they thus emphasised how (at least on one level) these structures and practices make such positioning incontestable. They clearly saw the ways of knowing about illicit drug use that are produced via the structures and practices of the law as making the use particular substances and those who engage in such conduct intractably knowable in terms of deviance. Thus they clearly saw these ways of knowing as deeply problematic.

Critically however, participants spoke about these ways of knowing as establishing indisputable constructions of deviance not only through the practices of legal classification and identification, but also through the way that the implementation of such laws shapes other structural conditions such as supply, availability, price, and quality of substances.

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Many participants spoke at length about how legal practices impose constraints on how they can carry out their use. They emphasised, for example, that often their engagement in forms of conduct that are considered deviant, disordered, and/or disreputable is a consequence of these socio-structurally imposed constraints. Often, therefore, they expressed significant concern about the way that the implementation of illicit drug laws greatly restricts their capacity to avoid acting in ways that are deemed deviant and/or disordered.

Max, for example, spoke about the way that certain parts of his drug use through which he could be positioned in terms of deviance are a product of the price and purity of amphetamines (both products of the implementation of supply and demand laws and policies):

Well it does hurt the family... yep... and I know I shouldn't... uh, it hurts the kids... only 'cause they miss out on material items, only 'cause it's so expensive. Because if it was like a packet of cigarettes it would be a lot easier (...) And the quality of it has gone downhill a lot; you've got to pay twice as much for it.

He highlighted how his conduct and subjectivity at times occur in ways that are seen as undesirable or deviant because of the way that such socio-structural conditions make certain actions possible whilst making others unattainable. In keeping the price high and the quality low, for example, these structures largely preclude the possibility of engaging in regular drug use without financial burden. In doing so, these structures can be seen as making unacceptable, undesirable actions (e.g., overspending), and hence unacceptable, undesirable subject positions (e.g., irresponsible), unavoidable as long as the individual wishes to engage in illicit drug use. Thus, Max spoke about these socio-structural constraints as making it difficult at times to avoid acting in ways that position him in terms of deviance and/or disorder. Indeed, in seeing himself as acting in ways that are at odds with the ideals of 'responsible parenting' because of these conditions, Max articulated how such socio-structural ways of knowing make charges of deviance and disorder something that he cannot avoid as long as he engages in such conduct.

Cameron likewise problematised the way that the legal system generates social, structural, and environmental conditions in which actions deemed to be deviant and/or disordered become unavoidable. He described how the restricted availability of cannabis obstructs his capacity to behave in responsible, prudent, and reputable ways when accessing this substance:

...if an honest citizen that wanted to just go and smoke a joint or something on a Friday didn't have to go to some dodgy suburb and interact with someone they wouldn't normally deal with, and put themselves in danger and, you know, do something that's illegal, then I think, you know, it would definitely be a positive thing for people.

Thus he expressed concern about the way that certain socio-structural conditions construct the acts and subjects of illicit drug use in terms of deviance by making it necessary to go to certain lengths to access substances – lengths that are at odds with the ideals of responsibility and reputability and which are thus at odds with the position of “honest citizen”. Indeed, he implied here that his preference is to access cannabis in ways that are consistent with responsible, safe, and socially acceptable conduct but that such avenues for conducting himself (and hence for being constructed) in normative terms are not available because of the constraints that legal regulatory structures establish. His take on the way that these structured ways of knowing construct the acts and subjects of illicit drug use therefore was that they make positions of deviance and disorder unavoidable. That is, he spoke of these social and structural conditions as making the kinds of risky (e.g., putting oneself in “danger”), irresponsible (e.g., going “to some dodgy suburb”), and disreputable (e.g., doing “something that’s illegal”) behaviours that designate such otherness something that cannot be avoided if one wishes to use such substances.

The way that such legal regulations construct him as deeply deviant for attempting to access cannabis when its availability is low was also something Cameron spoke of as particularly problematic:

At the moment it's been very difficult to, um, to get any pot in Perth, basically. And (...) it lends to making you behave in a way that you don't necessarily want to behave. Like, for example, recently I've been asking a lot of people if they've been able to, whatever, like “can you get any weed”, or whatever. And it makes you feel like, you know, worse than you actually are, because it makes you feel/look a bit like a junkie 'cause you're hassling your friends and that sort of thing.

The regulatory conditions which aim to restrict the availability of cannabis are spoken of here as positioning Cameron in deeply stigmatising ways when he attempts to access this drug. In particular, he described these laws and the way they restrict supply as having the effect of positioning him as “a bit like a junkie” because of the way that they establish certain behaviours as the only recourse for gaining access to cannabis. Thus, for Cameron the effect of these structural conditions is that he comes to “feel/look” as though he is somehow desperate and/or compulsive. Critically then, he saw socio-structural ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects as bringing about drug-using

practices, and hence bringing about subject positions, that are at odds with the values and ideals of self-control and restraint – values that he otherwise identifies with. Thus, he saw these ways of knowing as making him and his conduct knowable in ways that are inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising – constructing him and his drug use as “worse” (i.e., more deviant and disordered) than they are. Such concern about the way that the structures and practices of illicit drug policy, law and regulation preclude opportunities for them and their conduct to be constructed in socially sanctioned ways, and instead instate constructions of deviance, risk, compulsion and so forth as unavoidable, was thus a key theme that emerged throughout the interviews.

Participants similarly saw the way that medical policies and regulatory practices construct the acts and subjects of illicit drug use as problematic. Kurt, for example, expressed concern about the way that the medico-legal guidelines which regulate the prescription of opiate medications mean that the only way for him to access such substances is to participate in “the black market” economy of illicit drugs and therefore act in ways that are out of step with his values and with the kind of lifestyle he had led prior to his back injury. As he put it: “because of the way they operate you’re forced to find other avenues”. This was a concern that Ron and Penny shared:

But since we haven't been able to [access medication], we've been cut off, you know, we've had to resort to, you know [use illicit opiates], like when we can, you know, just to get rid of the pain (Penny).

Again therefore, it was apparent that the participants saw conditions and practices that restrict the availability of certain substances—this time under the auspices of medical as well as legal policies and practices—as a constructing them in terms of deviance and disorder. That is, they saw their engagement in behaviours that impute deviance and disorder (e.g., the use of illegally bought prescription medications) as an outcome of these socio-structurally produced restrictions. For example, they described how the behaviours of purchasing and using illegally purchased opiate medication inscribe otherness not only through being illegal but through the extent to which they impute risk, untrustworthiness and illegitimacy. Importantly therefore, participants spoke of such medical and legal practices and structures as problematic for the way that they construct what they do and who they are in a manner that fails to adequately correspond with the other realities that make up their conduct and subjectivities. Indeed, they emphasised how these ways of knowing form understandings that are not only stigmatising and marginalising but which obscure aspects of what they do and who they are that are legitimate, responsible, and

respectable (e.g., the pursuit of pain relief in the context of legitimate pain) (see also Bell & Salmon, 2008). Ron, Penny and Kurt, for example, did not speak about their involvement in unsanctioned drug-using practices in terms of individual choice, preference, or desire, but rather as an outcome of the medical regulatory practices that preclude opportunities for them to access opiates in a sanctioned manner. Thus they expressed concern about how these socio-structural ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects produce decontextualised constructions of such conduct and subjects; which has been identified by other researchers as underlying the inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising ways that the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are constructed (Bourgois, 1998, 2000; Duff, 2015; Fraser, 2004; Moore, 2008; Rhodes et al., 2007; Rhodes et al., 2009).

Medical practices and policies that require routine surveillance and identification of individuals were also problematised for generating conditions in which drug-using subjects are seen, known about, and acted upon in disenfranchising ways. Ron, for example, expressed particular concern regarding the way that the practices and structures of opiate pharmacotherapy treatment (such as the supervised dosing of methadone at community pharmacies) make people who are on such programs identifiable in terms of deviance and disorder:

See, people don't realise, once you're on methadone - uh, to put you on 'done you have to go to your chemist to get your dose every morning - people look at you like you're a fucking junkie, right?!

Consistent with this, research elsewhere has shown how the structures and practices which make up such treatment programs construct individuals engaged in such treatment in terms of deviance and disorder. For example, drug user registries, supervised dosing requirements, restricted opening hours, queues and waiting times, unrealistic expectations of 'stability', and so forth have been shown to position such individuals as in need of strict monitoring and regulation, as well as unentitled to privacy or discretion (Bourgois, 2000; Fischer et al., 2004; Fraser & valentine, 2009; Ning, 2009; Wolfe, 2007; Zadjow, 2006).

Further, Ron highlighted how treatment structures operate to construct those engaged in them as deviant and disordered by establishing particular environmental or spatial conditions in and through which such individuals are seen and treated as other. As he described, the requirement to attend the community space of the local pharmacy means that such individuals become identifiable as opiate dependent – a subject position that is accompanied by a host of litanies which impute marked deviance and disorder. Thus Ron

saw the spatial restrictions or regulations that are established by such medical structures as also playing a role in the construction of such individuals as other. Similarly, Sara discussed the way that legal structures establish spatial regulations which operate to not only exclude people on the basis of their substance use, but to also construct them as unhealthy and contaminating:

It's the same with cigarettes now, you're a leper if you smoke, you have to stand outside a pub and things like that, so, and everyone hates it!

As well as expressing concern about the impact that stricter smoking laws in Western Australia (see Pepper & Fenech, 2010) have in terms of physically excluding people who smoke cigarettes from social and recreational spaces, Sara thus also expressed concern about the way that such spatial demarcations produce such individuals in terms of otherness (i.e., as unhealthy subjects who pose a risk to others). Thus, she clearly saw these structural ways of knowing (i.e., the mandatory ejection of individuals who smoke into outer social spaces) as constructing such individuals in ways that result in them being seen and treated as akin to the subject who is diseased, contagious and thus highly undesirable (e.g., “a leper”). Again therefore, the participants clearly saw these socio-structural ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects as establishing more structured and more formalised charges of deviance and disorder; and hence as making up their conduct and subjectivities in ways that result in them being formally seen and treated as other.

5.2.2 Social regulations: Making up “antisocial” acts and subjects

In addition to the more formal ways that socio-structural practices and conditions make up the acts and subjects of illicit drug use in terms of deviance and disorder, the participants also expressed concern about the less formal social structures and regulations which likewise construct such conduct and subjectivities in terms of otherness. Indeed, participants often explicitly problematised the way that formal and informal social practices work in unison to produce the acts and subjects of illicit drug use in terms of deviance and disorder. Sam, for example, spoke about differences between cannabis laws in Australia and in the Netherlands⁴ as producing very different informal social regulations and hence as constructing the acts and subjects of cannabis use in very different ways:

⁴ At the time of interview, cannabis possession was a criminal offence in Western Australia. Although cannabis possession is illegal in the Netherlands, the breach of this law is treated as a misdemeanor and the practice of non-enforcement is widespread (Rolles, 2014).

I reckon there'd be a lot less paranoia, a lot less people freaking the hell out. Because like you get, you go out in public and you think "oh they're looking at me", you know? But if you were allowed to be like that [intoxicated] then I think people would be fine. I think what causes it, with the all anxiety and that, is mainly perceptions of other people, like when you're thinking "oh god, are they looking at me? Do they think I'm you know some sort of weirdo?" (...) But if you could walk freely in the streets then I don't think you would put yourself down as much really. (...) I don't think it's an antisocial drug, I think it's made antisocial, you know what I mean? I don't think the drug itself is actually antisocial. I think you're quite happy and talkative and whatever on it, but I think they make it antisocial because you can't go out in public like that. And then you get paranoid and then want to sit in the corner and you know.

Again, Sam expressed concern about the way that stigmatising and marginalising understandings of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects arise from specific legal structures. In addition to this however, she also spoke of these problematic understandings as arising from the more socially-based prescriptions and proscriptions that such structures establish. Indeed, she specifically described how certain actions (e.g., socially withdrawing) and hence certain subjectivities (e.g., the "antisocial" drug-using subject) are produced via informal regulatory practices (e.g., social censures of public intoxication) regulatory practices. It was evident in her description of how the acts and subjects are "made antisocial" via these formal and informal regulatory practices, therefore, that Sam saw such socio-structural ways of knowing as problematic for the way that they formally *and informally* make certain charges of otherness difficult to avoid.

Most participants shared similar concerns about the way that both formal structures and less formal social practices coincide to construct the acts and subjects of illicit drug use in stigmatising and marginalising ways. Indeed, Nate expressed concern about the way that he is marginalised in social settings for his use of illicit drugs, regardless of his level of intoxication, and how this contrasts with the way that people who drink alcohol are seen and treated as "normal":

I used to HATE the fact that people, that alcohol used to be legalised, normalised; that it would be completely normal for people to get drunk and everyone would love it and it would be all socially normal but it would be socially awkward for me to be the only person at a party that would be on drugs. 'Cause you'd sort of seek out the only person that was [on drugs], 'cause you were, you were very separate, you were very... there was a big difference between you and [people who weren't on drugs], 'cause I was a minority.

It was clear here that Nate saw the socio-structural conditions which classify alcohol use as legal and drug use as illegal as problematic for the way that they make the latter form of conduct socially deviant, and hence for the way that they construct him as distinctly other

to (or “very separate” from) the dominant social group when using illicit drugs in social situations. His take on these more structured ways of knowing, therefore, was that the constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects they produce make it “socially awkward” to be someone who uses illicit drugs in mainstream social contexts; just as they make it “completely normal” to be someone who drinks alcohol in social situations. Nate thus expressed clear dissatisfaction with the way that informal social regulations coincide with more formal legal regulations to exclude or segregate people who use illicit drugs from social belonging and participation, relegating them to marginal positions by constructing such conduct and those engaged in it as unlawful, unacceptable, and undesirable.

This was something Josh likewise saw as problematic. As he explained:

I just keep comparing it to alcohol; seeing how people react you know alcohol that sort of thing. You know, it's just socially acceptable to go out and drink so much that you wet your pants and wake up at a bus stop and people will just laugh at that, you know? And (...) you either turn a blind eye to it or you just laugh it off. But if you said you went out and had some drugs, you know, everyone will suddenly cringe and that sort of thing.

And went on to say:

See, if you went to one of those adult dinner parties and everyone was blind drunk, you know, you would probably just have a laugh about it. But if they were all high on pills I think most people would be genuinely freaked out by it.

He thus expressed concern about how the informal social regulations established via formal legal regulations not only make the acts and subjects of alcohol use “socially acceptable” but also make the acts and subjects of illicit drug use decidedly other. Indeed, Josh explicitly described the way that less formal social regulations establish what kinds of intoxication are acceptable and how these regulatory practices thus construct the use of illicit drugs and those engaged in such conduct as undesirable (i.e., as something that makes “everyone cringe” or that people would be “freaked out by”). He thus clearly saw these socio-structural ways of knowing as constructing illicit drug use and drug-using subject unacceptable or antisocial in ways that make positions of deviance and/or disorder inevitable when using illicit drugs in such social settings. Again therefore, this highlighted the extent to which participants were concerned with the way that the acts and subjects of illicit drug use necessarily become covert, abnormal, and excluded through these socio-structural conditions and hence how these ways of knowing make it difficult for such conduct and subjects to avoid being seen and treated in terms of deviance and disorder.

5.2.3 Authorized otherness

The findings that emerged through this second lens of analysis made it evident that along with their concerns about being automatically seen and treated as deviant and disordered on the basis of their use of illicit drugs, the participants were also concerned about the ways that their conduct and subjectivities are formally and informally defined, recorded, regulated and located as such. In speaking about the way that the constructions that emerge via legal, medical, and social structures, practices, and regulations firmly make up their conduct and subjectivities in terms of deviance and disorder, the participants voiced significant concern about the extent to which such constructions of otherness are not the isolated effect of superficial assumptions but are also established in and through these structured and authoritative mechanisms. Importantly therefore, they simultaneously expressed considerable concern about the extent to which these structures and practices operate to establish the grounds for marked stigma and marginalisation.

What the participants had to say about these ways of knowing therefore was in keeping with research which shows how legal, medical, economic, social and spatial practices construct certain drug-using practices and drug-using subjects in stigmatising and marginalising ways (Bell & Salmon, 2008; Bourgois, 1998; Fischer et al., 2004; Fraser & Valentine, 2009; Madden & Cavelieri, 2007; Rance et al., 2012; Rhodes et al., 2007; Paterson et al., 2013, Smith, 2010). Bourgois (1998) and Rhodes et al. (2007), for example, discuss the way that structural barriers make adherence to safer injecting practices unfeasible for people who use illicit drugs in street-based settings. They thus point out how stigmatising and marginalising subjectivities (e.g., 'dirty'/unsafe/irresponsible drug-using subjects) are made up via these structures and the barriers they establish. Similarly, Bell and Salmon (2008) discuss the way that medical taxonomies which differentiate between 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' pain patients correspondingly construct certain forms of substance use and certain drug-using subjects as legitimate and illegitimate and hence have the deeply stigmatising and marginalising effect of constructing some patients as "undeserving" of pain relief or intervention (p. 172).

Critical work has thus problematised the extent to which these structured ways of knowing make certain subject positions (e.g., the irresponsible drug user) very difficult to avoid in certain contexts, yet the responsibility for such subjectivities, and hence for being seen and treated as such, continues to be attributed to the individual. Again therefore, such work points out the extent to which stigma and marginalisation is founded upon the inadequate contextualisation of understandings of and responses to illicit drug use and

drug-using subjects (Bourgois, 2000; Miller, 2001; Moore, 2009; Moore & Fraser, 2004; Rhodes, 2002; Rhodes, Singer, Bourgois, Friedman, & Strathdee, 2005). Importantly, this seemed to be precisely what the participants had to say about these more structured ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects. They clearly spoke about the extent to which these ways of knowing make stigmatising and marginalising constructions of their conduct and subjectivities unavoidable at times due to the authority of the structures and practices that produce them. What's more, they consistently voiced concern about the way that such constructions of their conduct and subjectivities as deviant and/or disordered fail to take into account the extent to which their drug using practices and their subject positions are determined by these structures and practices.

5.3 Objecting to otherness

Critically therefore, the unifying theme that emerged in what the participants expressed about the exterior and socio-structural constructions of their conduct and subjectivities was that of objection to otherness. At both levels of analysis the participants clearly voiced an objection to the extent to which these two ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects produce inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising constructions of what they do and who they are. In particular, they clearly objected to the extent to which such constructions establish the grounds for people who use illicit drugs to be seen and treated as markedly, irrefutably, and irrevocably other. It was thus evident throughout that the participants challenged the appropriateness of the constructions that arise out of automatic, uncontested assumptions, as well as legal, medical, and social structures and practices. Consistently, they expressed significant concern about a) the positions of deviance and disorder that such assumptions and practices make so incontestable and unavoidable, and b) the automatic and authoritative ways that they are seen and treated as untrustworthy, disreputable, ineligible, antisocial, irresponsible, illegitimate, and ultimately less human.

Understandably therefore, it was a theme of contestation that stood out in how the participants saw these two different, intersecting ways of knowing. Although this theme of contestation likewise dominated the findings at the third level of analysis, worldview/discourse, this third set of findings was juxtaposed with first two. In contrast to the findings documented throughout this chapter, the participants did not appear to see the constructions of their conduct and subjectivities that more discursive ways of knowing produce as problematic. Rather, they spoke in great detail about one particular set of discourses as providing an empowering alternative to the constructions of deviance and

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disorder that more automatic and structured ways of knowing produce. Indeed, as is discussed at length in the following chapter, the most prominent theme that emerged in the overall analysis of the data was that the participants emphatically endorsed the discourses of neoliberal citizenship as the most appropriate way to know about what they do and who they are. Interestingly, therefore, the findings that were generated through the third lens of CLA seemed to capture what the participants saw to be the answer to the problematic constructions produced via more superficial and structured ways of knowing.

Chapter Six

6. Discursive Constructions: Reclaiming Citizenship

Throughout this chapter I present the rich findings that emerged from the third level of analysis – discourse/worldview. It was overwhelmingly apparent throughout the interviews that the participants saw the discourses of neoliberal citizenship as an appropriate and valuable way of knowing about their conduct and subjectivities. As is presented in this chapter, the value participants placed on these contemporary discourses was evident in the way that they drew on the language of the enterprising neoliberal subject to construct their own practices and subjectivities in ways that enabled them to reject imputations of deviance and disorder and instead be positioned as successful neoliberal citizens. This occurred through aligning themselves with the norms and ethics of neoliberal citizenship both despite of and through their use of illicit drugs. Further, it occurred through the practice of identity work, in which participants aligned their conduct and subjectivities with the requirements of neoliberal citizenship by constructing certain drug-using practices and subjects as ‘other’ to these norms and values. I thus conclude this chapter by discussing the concerns about the counterproductive effects of these contemporary discourses that emerged out of the participants’ articulation of a clear preference for these contemporary ways of knowing.

6.1 Making worldview visible: Producing the active citizen

The third analytic lens through which the data was examined was that of worldview/discourse. This level of analysis is shaped by the constructionist and poststructuralist assumption that the way in which we understand and approach an issue is contingent on the worldview that we adopt (Inayatullah, 1998, 2004), as this dictates which discourses are made available and unavailable and thus, as explained in chapter two, determines which realities, knowledges and subjects are ‘ruled in’ and ‘ruled out’ (Burr, 2003; Hall, 1997). The aim of this level of analysis was thus to explore how the participants saw particular worldviews/discourses as constructing their conduct and subjectivities and to examine their take on these constructions. Importantly however, as discussed in chapter four, discursive ways of knowing are understood to be less visible and less conscious than those at the levels of litany and socio-structural conditions (Inayatullah, 1998, 2004). Thus, consistent with the way that discourses are understood to operate (Burr, 2003; Hall, 1997), it is assumed when conducting this third layer of analysis that we are not entirely conscious of the discourses or worldview we adopt. Consequently, what was analysed here was not what the participants explicitly articulated about particular discourses, but rather the way that they drew on discursive ways of knowing throughout their interviews.

It was evident early on in the collection and analysis of the interview data that the discourses of contemporary liberal government featured consistently and extensively in what the participants had to say about their drug use and themselves. What this level of analysis made apparent was that the participants saw these particular discursive ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects as producing the most adequate constructions of what they do and who they are. More than this however, it became apparent through this analytic lens that the participants saw these contemporary ways of knowing as the answer to the problem of the charges of deviance and disorder that occur via automatic and authoritative constructions of illicit drug use. Indeed, it became apparent that they saw these discourses of neoliberal subjectivity as the solution to the problem of the marked stigma and marginalisation they encounter as a consequence of these charges of otherness. Conveyed in the extensive ways that they drew on the discourses of neoliberalism was the extent to which, by enabling them to establish that they and their behaviours are aligned with rather than separate from the norms and values of contemporary liberal culture, the participants saw these ways of knowing as deeply valuable for the normalisation, reassurance and empowerment they generate. Overwhelmingly, it was apparent in what they had to say that the participants saw these discourses as an appropriate and legitimate device through which they could (re)establish their eligibility to be positioned as full, successful citizens.

The rationalities of governance that have emerged with contemporary liberal culture produce the ideal subject of government (i.e., the full citizen) as one who is active in their own government (Rose & Miller, 1992; Rose, 1996a; Valverde, 1996). It is thus this relation to selfhood and citizenship as an entrepreneurial project that constitutes the normative and ideal subject of neoliberalism:

The language of the entrepreneurial individual, endowed with freedom and autonomy, has come to predominate over almost any other in evaluations of the ethical claims of political power and programmes of government. A sphere of freedom is to be (re)established, where autonomous agents make their decisions, pursue their preferences and seek to maximise the quality of their lives. For neoliberalism the political subject is less a social citizen with powers and obligations deriving from membership of a collective body, than an individual whose citizenship is active (Rose & Miller, 1992, pp. 200-201).

It was clear throughout the data that participants saw this “language of the entrepreneurial individual”—made up of the discourses of freedom, autonomy, individual choice, responsibility, authenticity, risk-management, consumption, economic rationalism, and so forth—as more accurately constructing what they do and who they are. It was also clear that they saw these discourses as having the additional benefit of making it possible for them to be constructed as engaged “in the process of their own self-governance through processes of endless self-examination, self-care, and self-improvement” (Petersen, 1996, pp. 48-49), and hence as making it possible for them to be constructed as consistent with rather than other to the ideal subject of neoliberal government. Indeed, the way they drew on these discourses showed the value they placed on them having the potential to construct them as subjects who are concerned with the contemporary ethic of the conduct of conduct (Foucault, 1988). That is, with shaping, regulating and managing how one is constructed through what they do and do not do; a concern which positions the individual as engaged in the practice or technology of self through which neoliberal citizens are regulated, governed and defined (Rose, 1996a). It was apparent, therefore, that the participants saw these discourses as an effective tool for responding to the marked stigma, marginalisation, and disenfranchisement that more automatic and authoritative ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects produce. Indeed, they clearly valued the way these discourses made it possible to construct their conduct and selves as consistent with the enterprising subject who, through an active orientation to their own government, successfully lives up to the requirements of neoliberal citizenship, and thus who is entitled to be seen and treated as a respectable, credible, and valued subject.

As is detailed throughout this chapter, the participants drew on these discourses, and hence established grounds for reclaiming their citizenship, in two different ways. Most conservatively, they drew on these discourses to construct what they do and who they are as consistent with the norms and values of neoliberal citizenship *despite* the fact that they use illicit drugs. More radically, they drew on these discourses to position themselves as living up to the ethics and expectations of neoliberal citizenship *through* their use of illicit drugs. Critically however, the most striking finding, evident from early on in the research, was the way participants established their alignment with the norms and values of neoliberal citizenship by drawing contrasts between their own conduct and subjectivities with those that are *other* to these norms and values.

6.2 Citizenship despite drug use

The extent to which the discourses of neoliberal citizenship have been drawn upon in AOD research over the last 25 years or more has meant that the language of 'normalised', 'controlled', and 'recreational' illicit drug use and drug-using subjects has become increasingly "naturalised" (Moore & Fraser, 2006, p. 3039). Constructions of the self-regulating, responsible drug-using subject whose engagement in illicit drug use impedes minimally, if at all, on their achievement and maintenance of a successful, productive and healthy lifestyle and who is seen as living up to rather than deviating from dominant social and cultural norms and values produced through such language have thus also become increasingly naturalised (see Decorte, 2001; Duff, 2005; Green & Moore, 2009; Moore, 1992; Mugford, 1994; Reinerman et al., 1994; Rødner, 2005, 2008; Measham & Shiner, 2009; Parker et al., 1998; Parker et al., 2002; Pennay & Moore, 2010). It was not surprising therefore that the participants were shown to frequently draw on the discourses of neoliberal citizenship in these ways to establish the grounds for being seen and treated as normative, successful subjects despite their use of illicit drugs. As I outline in this section, the two key discourses they predominantly drew on were those of responsibility and autonomy; showing how these ways of knowing make it possible for their drug use to be seen as not impacting on their capacity to maintain a normative lifestyle in which they remain capable of exercising choice and autonomy.

Importantly, the discourses of neoliberal citizenship have most commonly been adopted when constructing those drugs, drug-using practices, and drug-using subjects that are more readily identifiable in normative, non-problematic terms such as cannabis, ecstasy and amphetamine-type stimulants (Duff, 2005; Green & Moore, 2009; Parker et al., 2002; Pearson, 2001; Pennay, 2012; Pennay & Moore, 2010). However, in the present analysis the participants drew on the discourses of responsibility and autonomy to construct themselves in normative terms regardless of the type of drug(s) they use, the manner in which they use them, and even when aspects of their drug-using practices and their lifestyles were less readily identifiable as non-problematic. Indeed, it was clear that *all* participants saw these contemporary discourses as making it possible for their use of illicit drugs to be understood as not necessarily abolishing their capacity to conduct themselves in responsible and autonomous ways and hence as not necessarily abolishing their eligibility to be seen and treated as living up to social and cultural norms and values. What the participants had to say about these discourses therefore was that they are not limited to those forms of illicit

drug use that live up to middle class values (see Miller, 2001, for discussion), but rather that they can be applied and generate benefits more broadly.

6.2.1 Responsibility and productivity: Maintaining a conventional life

One of the key ways that the participants drew on contemporary ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects was to construct their drug use as a compartmentalised, leisure-based activity that does not prevent them from successfully completing those activities that are deemed to be the right kind of priorities in life. That is, they drew on such discourses to construct themselves as successful neoliberal subjects who are committed to living and acting responsibly despite their use of illicit drugs:

See, I know that I'm mature and, you know, I do a lot of things, I act my age. But this is how I choose to spend my hard-earned leisure time. And uh, I don't think it is right for people to judge me, on how I choose to, you know, spend my time. I'm always there for work, or anything, and it doesn't affect any other aspect of my life.

In making it possible to construct his drug use as an activity that does not hinder his capacity to conduct himself in normative, socially-valued ways (e.g., acting in developmentally appropriate ways, being a responsible employee, engaging in prudent, calculated and volitional consumption, maintaining a work-life balance), it was evident that Josh saw the discourses of responsibility, productivity, and choice as enabling him to be positioned as someone who successfully fulfils the criteria for neoliberal citizenship. He clearly placed value on these discourses for producing constructions of his conduct and subjectivity that make it possible to reject the stigmatising and marginalising automatic and authoritative constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects as deviant and disordered – in this case, the irresponsible drug user whose compulsion and/or recklessness results in a failure to prioritise the “right things” in life (Keane, 2004, p. 193). His comments highlighted how, in contrast to such otherness, the discourses of autonomy and economic rationalism make it possible to construct his drug use as a calculated choice that is delimited according to the value he places on maintaining an otherwise conventional lifestyle. Particularly noteworthy, is the way he used such discourses to construct his choice as not limited to the analysis of costs/benefits in terms of “risk”, but as also involving calculations about how to maximise productivity and reward (e.g., by weighing up his time as a resource that is to be earned, allocated and spent wisely in order to get the best out of himself), as well as how to live responsibly. His remarks thus highlighted the manifold ways in which these discursive ways of knowing about his conduct and subjectivity make it possible to be seen and treated as a successful neoliberal citizen while engaging in illicit drug use.

Often participants were shown to appropriate the discourses of responsibility and productivity in order to dispute or reject seemingly incontestable and unavoidable positions of deviance and disorder, such as the undisciplined, unproductive, and irresponsible subject. For example, Sam positioned herself as responsible and productive (i.e., a good employee in “a good company” and as someone who fulfils a range of social and cultural expectations or obligations) in order to contest the assumption that she is irresponsible and unproductive because of her cannabis use:

...as long as you're working and, yeah, I 'spose that's another thing, you know, I think well I've kept a job for 3 years, the same job for 3 years in a good company, that would probably be horrified (laughing) but, um, you know, I've never had any warnings, you know, so that's a way I 'spose I justify it as well, I think 'well I am getting through life, I am still doing things that everyone else does'

These discourses thus appear to be something Sam sees as an appropriate recourse for contesting the imputation that her use of cannabis prevents her from meeting the day-to-day requirements of citizenship, and for reclaiming her eligibility to be seen and treated as a normative, successful citizen. It was evident in the multitude of ways that the participants constructed themselves as “still doing things that everyone else does” even though they use illicit drugs that they saw the appropriation of these discourses of responsibility and productivity as a suitable way to redress the inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising ways in which their conduct and subjectivities are typically constructed. Indeed, through the appropriation of these discourses the participants frequently positioned themselves as actively maintaining a productive and responsible stance to those life domains that are considered ‘proper’ priorities, such as vocational, economic, social, and familial obligations:

...as long as you can, you know, do the right things during the day (Blake)

...so long as the kids are happy, there's food on the table (Levi)

...I still paid my bills; I still went to work each day like a proper citizen (Nate)

...so long as you're still living your life and meeting your obligations and, you know, as long as you're not, you know you're smoking to live and not living to smoke sort of thing (Cameron)

Such interactions thus made evident the extent to which the participants saw this appropriation of the contemporary discourses of responsibility and productivity as beneficial for the way they make it possible to contest the implications of deviance and disorder that they are so often charged with. By detailing their commitment to doing the “right things”, such as meeting vocational and familial “obligations”, these discourses

constructed the participants' drug use and subjectivities in ways that distanced them from those stigmatising and marginalising constructions of the deviant and/or disordered drug-using subject who is unable to maintain a well-rounded, functional, and responsible lifestyle and instead aligned them with the "proper citizen".

Another benefit the participants conveyed as arising out of the practice of appropriating the contemporary discourse of individual responsibility was the construction of their conduct and subjectivities in terms of active, careful risk management, and hence the capacity to what they do and who they are to be aligned with one of the definitive ethics of neoliberal citizenship. Abby's description of how she approaches her use of illicit drugs exemplified this:

It's not that I don't take risks but it's very calculated. Like, if I'm going to take a drug I'll be asking questions about it and I'll do it very safely - as safely as I can obviously with all those risks involved in taking drugs. But I'll want to know what it takes to work, I'll take the minimum to start with, I'll ask other people, I'll wait to see how it effects other people.

Drawing heavily on the language of the entrepreneurial subject, Abby constructed her drug use as a practice that is shaped by "calculated" and prudent decision-making and hence showed how these discourses of responsibility and risk management position her as living up to key criteria of neoliberal citizenship; constructions which frequently occurred throughout the interviews. The way that they often formed their conduct in terms of such calculative and active risk management thus highlighted the participants' take on these contemporary discourses. Specifically, it conveyed their preference for these ways of knowing – a preference that was clearly based on the potential for these discourses to contest automatic and authoritative constructions of their drug use as entirely irresponsible and unchecked, and hence make it possible to reject deeply stigmatising and marginalising constructions of themselves as reckless and undisciplined subjects whose potential in life is lost. A similar message emerged in relation to the associated discourse of autonomy.

6.2.2 Autonomy: Maintaining freedom

The most prominent discourse which the participants drew upon throughout their interviews was that of autonomy. Given that neoliberal citizenship is defined according to the capacity to be governed through freedom (Rose, 1996a; Rose & Miller, 1992; Sedgwick, 1994; Valverde, 1996) and the extent to which automatic and authoritative constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects insist that such conduct and subjects are seen and treated as void of such a capacity, it is unsurprising that the

participants placed such value on the potential to construct their conduct and subjectivities in terms of choice, agency, active decision-making, and so forth. Participants drew extensively on the discourse of the autonomous subject in order to construct their drug-using practices as volitional and controlled, and to construct themselves as unimpaired in their capacity to act freely and live their lives according to individual choice and self-regulation despite their use of illicit drugs. Doing so made apparent the extent to which they saw this way of knowing as producing understandings of their drug use and themselves that are not only in keeping with the realities of their conduct and subjectivities, but which also establish the grounds for reclaiming their eligibility to be seen and treated as meeting the most important requirement of neoliberal citizenship.

Participants clearly saw the appropriation of the discourse of autonomy, specifically the language of choice and self-discipline, as a powerful way to contest the positions of deviance and disorder that are established via automatic assumptions of impaired control and authoritative constructions of tolerance and withdrawal. As Hamish and Sam commented:

My ex called me an addict once. I remember responding quite, quite unhappily to that. I didn't like that identity being put on me, because it implied no control. Um, whereas I see that I choose to do it. Harping back to the, the desperation, the junkie mentality, I don't, I don't do that. Like, I ran out of pot last night, I haven't made a phone call today, I haven't chased it up yet, I'm not really that worried and it's the weekend you know (laughing). So behaviour like that gives me a solid sense that I'm not necessarily addicted.

I could go weeks without it [cannabis], and I would want it, but I wouldn't be, like, on edge. Like, with cigarettes, I've tried giving up cigarettes and, you know, one day [and] I feel like my eyes are bulging out of my head, like, I just get all anxious. But I won't have that with that [cannabis] because its, um, you can make the choice. Like, if I've got to go down the shops or if I've got to take my son to a party or something it's not like I'm going to get stoned before I go, you know, I can make the choice to wait, you know? I'll do it once everything's done at the end of the day and you're home and you don't have to go out anywhere.

The value of constructions of self-restraint and choice that the discourse of autonomy produces is made apparent in both these comments. The appropriation of such discourses was evidently something Hamish and Sam saw as an effective tool through which they could to hold their conduct and selves up against charges of compulsion and withdrawal and confidently reject such otherness. Moreover, their comments highlighted how the discourses of autonomy can intersect with that of responsibility to position people who use illicit drugs as engaged in the kinds of actions, as maintaining the kinds of physical states, and fulfilling the kind of lifestyles that are consistent with social norms and values (i.e., that

are not ruled by the consumption of drugs). Again therefore, they were shown to place value on these discourses for making it possible to reject the applicability of the stigmatising and marginalising understandings of addiction to their conduct and selves. Both Hamish and Sam thus highlighted the benefits of constructing their conduct and subjectivities in terms of autonomy or self-regulation – showing how the appropriation of these contemporary ways of knowing makes it possible to disavow the grounds for being seen and treated as other and thus makes it possible to re-establish the grounds for being seen and treated active, successful citizens. Indeed, they conveyed the value of such constructions not only through explicitly drawing on the language of self-restraint and choice but also through their descriptions of the self-aware and self-monitoring stance they adopt towards their conduct and themselves. For example, the way that Hamish described himself as having derived “a solid sense” that he is not “addicted” by monitoring his reactions to not having any cannabis shows that he values being constructed as engaging in self-surveillance and striving to maintain adequate self-knowledge; which is understandable given that such constructions position him as fulfilling the expectations of the enterprise of self that is so central to neoliberal citizenship. Sam’s comments likewise showed the value she placed on being constructed as maintaining this active, self-surveying and self-regulation relationship to her conduct and selfhood; constructions which once again position her as a self-governing and hence successful citizen.

Importantly, participants also showed how the appropriation of the discourse of autonomy could construct their conduct and subjectivities as aligned with the norms and values of neoliberal citizenship, even if they engaged in forms of drug use that were less readily identifiable in terms of control or self-regulation. That is, they showed how the discourse of choice could construct them as enterprising citizens, and hence disavow charges of deviance and disorder, even in the context of frequent drug use. Nate, for example, stated although he had “a long-term attachment” to speed:

I never viewed it as an addiction [because], like, I'd use it, it was my choice. I could still support it because I chose to do it. I decided to do the financial stuff to be able to support the drug habit [...] to me I was still living a relatively normal life, paying the bills, living a normal life, being socially normal...

It was clear here that, in contrast to automatic and structured assumptions of disorder (i.e., of addiction), Nate saw the language of volition, choice and self-control as a more appropriate way to construct his use of amphetamines, even though this conduct was central to his life at that time. He clearly saw such contemporary discourses as constituting

an effective way to contest and reject the automatic and authoritative pairing of daily or regular illicit drug use with an impaired capacity to exercise choice and control. These contemporary constructions of himself as acting in a volitional, self-controlled, and disciplined manner to ensure that he meets the day-to-day requirements of citizenship (such as “paying the bills”, engaging in social activities, etc.), are thus shown to be valuable to Nate for producing two key benefits. Firstly, they make it possible for him to categorically reject stigmatising and marginalising constructions of addiction as pertaining to him and his drug use, and simultaneously, they re-establish his positioning as a normative, successful citizen despite his regular use of amphetamines.

Interestingly, for some participants the appropriation of such contemporary discourses generated the potential to contest the applicability of certain stigmatising and marginalising constructions (e.g., compulsion and irrationality) to their conduct and subjectivities, without having to construct all aspects of what they do and who they are in normative terms. For example, through the appropriation of the discourse of the autonomous and volitional subject Ron and Penny established the grounds for being seen and treated as normative subjects without having to simultaneously reject constructions of opiate dependence:

Ron: We're not in the same class as somebody who does this for the high

Penny: yeah that's right, you know, we're not out robbing or ripping people off or bashing people

Ron: we don't go out stealing

Penny: to get drugs or anything you know? Just if we don't have any, or we don't have any money to get any, we just suffer.

In keeping with Seear and Fraser's (2010a) findings, Ron and Penny's comments are important as they show how constructions of individual choice can occur alongside constructions of tolerance and withdrawal in a way that diminishes the stigmatising and marginalising implications of such difficulties (i.e., making it possible to detach some of the more damning imputations of deviance and disorder from understandings of dependent drug use). In describing how socio-structural factors make the undesirable options of going into withdrawal or engaging in crime the only avenues of conduct available when they do not have access to opiates, they simultaneously draw on the discourse of autonomy in a way that insists that such restrictions on choice do not prevent them from remaining capable of exercising volition and self-regulation. Indeed, their comments make apparent the way that the discourse of autonomy (i.e., the articulation of a consistent preference,

when necessary, for “suffer[ing]” over crime) can construct them as not only self-regulating subjects but also as moral and responsible citizens despite their dependence on illicit opiates. It was clear therefore that Ron and Penny likewise saw such contemporary discourses as constructing what they do in appropriate and beneficial ways: contesting the totalising—and hence deeply stigmatising and marginalising—nature of constructions dependent drug use and the dependent drug-using subject. Their comments thus stood out as a powerful example of the benefits participants derived from appropriating these contemporary discursive ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects—those which construct such conduct and subjects in terms of productivity, responsibility, and autonomy—regardless of the specific drugs they use or the ways in which they use them.

A similar example emerged in Lee’s interview. She often talked about her drug use as problematic and in terms of a “loss of control”; describing heroin as bringing “doom and gloom” into her life and as something she felt unable to stop taking despite wanting to:

I tried to give up like 8 years ago, and didn’t succeed so I went ‘well what’s the point in doing that?’

She did not however pair these difficulties associated with her dependent use of heroin with charges of deviance and disorder in the way that automatic and authoritative constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects do. Rather, she drew out this distinction by drawing on the discourse of autonomy to construct her drug-using practices as rational, calculated choices:

I always score off the same person. If I can’t score off him I won’t score, um ‘cause I know that it’s clean and I know what I’m getting. Um, I always use with my partner so I’m always using with someone (...) Oh, and always in a safe environment, like not on the street or something like that.

In this description of her conduct as self-regulated despite the dependent nature of her heroin use and the difficulty she has in ceasing her use, Lee is constructed as a discerning and prudent consumer whose drug-related conduct is governed by the deliberate and careful assessment and minimisation of risk. For Lee, therefore, appropriating this discourse of autonomy clearly constituted an effective way to contest those constructions which insist that because she is dependent on heroin she is incapable of exercising *any* choice and that she will necessarily conduct herself in disreputable and reckless ways because of this (i.e., because the physiological and psychological need to “score” is constructed as governing all decisions and conduct). More than just constructing her as capable of

exercising volition however, Lee emphasised how such discourses make it possible for her to be constructed as engaging in the practice of careful risk management. In doing so she thus showed how the discourse of autonomy makes it possible to construct what she does and who she is as consistent with those norms and values that are central to neoliberal citizenship, and therefore as establishing the grounds for being treated as a normative citizen despite the fact that heroin use has become a significant problem in her life.

6.2.3 Summary

It was readily apparent throughout the analysis that the participants appropriated the discourses of neoliberal citizenship in extensive ways due to the potential for these ways of knowing to construct their conduct and subjectivities as consistent with, rather than other from, the norms and values of neoliberal citizenship. I have outlined above the value that participants placed on discourses of productivity, responsibility and autonomy for making it possible to be constructed as actively maintaining a productive and responsible lifestyle and as capable of maintaining their capacity for choice and self-regulation, despite their use of illicit drugs, and regardless of the nature of their drug use. In conveying how these discourses establish the grounds for them to be seen and treated as conducting themselves as successful, normative citizens, it was evident that the participants saw these contemporary ways of knowing as an appropriate and effective response to the longstanding shortcomings in how they and their conduct are constructed. It was obvious that their clear preference for these ways of knowing was based on the way these discourses make it possible to produce understandings and approaches that are more in keeping with the realities of what they do and who they are. Simultaneously however, this preference was also clearly based on the way such discourses make it possible to reject automatic and authoritative constructions of deviance and disorder.

6.3 Citizenship through drug use

More than enabling them to be constructed as maintaining neoliberal citizenship despite their use of illicit drugs, the analysis showed that the participants appropriated these contemporary ways of knowing in ways that constructed them as aligned with the norms and values of neoliberal citizenship *through their illicit drug use*. Indeed, the participants also extensively drew on the discourses of neoliberal citizenship in ways that constructed their drug-using practices as performative of the ethics of contemporary liberal culture and hence which constructed them as successful neoliberal citizens. These more radical appropriations of such discourses thus made apparent the extent to which they saw these ways of knowing as having the potential to be substantially beneficial. That is, these

instances made it evident that they saw these ways of knowing as having the potential to construct the acts and subjects of illicit drug use in ways that not only differ dramatically from the stigmatising and marginalising constructions of deviance and disorder but which establish more sweeping grounds for them to be seen and treated as full and successful citizens.

As Rose (2007a) describes, “the ethic of active citizenship that has taken shape in advanced liberal democracies...is an ethic in which the maximisation of lifestyle, potential, health, and quality of life has become almost obligatory” (p. 25). Unique to contemporary liberal culture, it was these discourses of active and entrepreneurial citizenship that the participants saw as making it possible to construct their use of illicit drugs, and hence their subjectivities, as consistent with the norms and ethics of contemporary liberal citizenship. Indeed, they drew on these discourses to construct their illicit drug use as a practice that enables them to maximise what they get out of life, as an act of deliberate consumption designed to bring about desired alterations in their internal and external experiences, as a tool for fostering authenticity and well-roundedness, and a way to master and transform themselves. Thus in showing how their use of illicit drugs can be constructed as a part of their life which facilitates rather than hinders their fulfilment of what have become the obligations of contemporary liberal citizenship (Rose & Miller, 1992; Valverde, 1996), and hence as a practice which establishes rather than undermines their eligibility to be seen and treated as such, it was clear why the participants expressed such a clear preference for these contemporary ways of knowing.

6.3.1 Maximising life

Many participants spoke about their drug use as an activity that enhances their lives in numerous ways. This was a particularly prominent theme in Cameron’s interview. He frequently spoke about his cannabis use as enhancing the enjoyment he experiences in life:

[My cannabis use] does have sort of negative elements in my life (...) I just find without it my quality of life is much, I don’t know, like less. I mean not in the sense that I’m not healthy or anything it’s just, like, I just enjoy things more.

In particular, he described it as enhancing his social experiences:

[Cannabis is] quite a social drug, you know? Like, some of the most interesting moments in my life have been when I’ve been under the influence of it. And some of the best conversations I’ve ever had have been when I’ve been under the influence of it.

Cameron thus often constructed his cannabis use as consistent with the contemporary liberal obligation to actively engage in conduct that maximises one's life experiences. Indeed, he described his use of this drug as not only enriching his social experiences, but as enhancing his overall enjoyment and his "quality of life". These contemporary constructions were thus clearly valued by Cameron for the way that they contest more automatic constructions which position him and his cannabis use as deviant and/or disordered. Indeed, he clearly valued these discourses for making it possible to position him as successfully conducting himself according to this particular requirement of contemporary liberal citizenship – positioning which only become intelligible through the discourses of the entrepreneurial citizen (Rose & Miller, 1992).

In his description of his poly-drug use, Ash likewise placed value on these discourses of active citizenship for making it possible to construct such conduct as performative of the ethic of maximising one's experiences and relationships in life:

Like, I think it just broadened, broadened a lot of things, like a lot of positive, like just experiences. And, um, yeah I mean I don't think I would have met some of the people I've met and actually become good friends with if I hadn't have done drugs.

This comment thus clearly conveyed the value Ash places on the potential to speak of drug use as an activity that can "broaden" various domains in his life, enabling him to have accessed valued forms of experience and sociality that he feels he is otherwise unlikely to have encountered. Thus, he clearly placed value on the potential for his conduct and subjectivity to be constructed in ways that are consistent with the ethics of self-improvement and self-development. It was the emergence of instances such as this throughout the data, therefore, that made apparent the more expansive benefits the participants derived from the appropriation of these discourses of contemporary citizenship. Such comments highlighted that participants saw such discourses as making it possible for their use of illicit drugs to be constructed in ways that position them as living up to the expectation that one adopt an active and enterprising orientation to self. With such positioning constituting a prerequisite for full neoliberal citizenship, such constructions thus made it possible for participants to contest those automatic and authoritative ways of knowing which construct their drug use as inevitably degrading their capacity to live a productive, rewarding, and meaningful life. Again therefore, it often seemed that the participants saw these discursive ways of knowing about their conduct and subjectivities as a valuable tool for redressing the inadequate, stigmatising and

marginalising constructions that are produced via more exterior and structured ways of knowing.

6.3.2 Cultivating consumers

In contemporary liberal culture practices of consumption have increasingly come to be seen as central to the production of subjects and citizens as identities and subjectivities are now more than ever made and remade through what we do (and do not) consume (see Du Gay, 1996; Featherstone, 1991; Miller & Rose, 1997; Race, 2005; Vitellone, 2003). The active citizen is thus expected to engage in forms of consumption that are deliberately selected on the basis of their capacity to produce desired subject positions. Thus the way that some participants constructed their drug use as an act of deliberate, strategic consumption showed the value they saw in appropriating these discourses of active citizenship. Indeed, through these discourses the participants constructed illicit drugs as commodities that can be consumed in a strategically-chosen fashion in order to produce desired outcomes and thus showed how these contemporary ways of knowing can position some drug-using subjects as active citizens who are concerned with the ethics of self-monitoring, self-improvement, and self-regulation.

For example, Nate frequently constructed his drug use as a deliberate practice of consumption designed to improve not only his social experiences but his social self. Indeed, he described his drug use as “very strategic, ‘cause we knew that was the best way to get what we wanted” – that is, he described it as the best way to “cultivate” both “opportunities to have a good night” and a sense of himself as “socially viable”. Thus through these contemporary discourses he constructed amphetamines as a commodity through which he could produce the desired outcomes of successful social engagement, participation, and identity. And consequently he showed how these ways of knowing make it possible for him to be constructed as engaged in rather than failing the “energetic pursuit of personal fulfilment and the incessant calculations that are to enable this to be achieved” that is expected of the enterprising, active citizen (Rose & Miller, 1992, p. 201). In enabling him to be positioned in such successful and normative terms rather than in terms of deviance, disorder and diminished citizenship, it was thus clear that Nate saw these contemporary ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects as generating adequate and normalising understandings of what he does and who he is. Likewise, Lucy constructed her drug use as a deliberate, strategic practice of consumption. She spoke about often carefully choosing not only which drugs to consume but when to consume

them according to the goal of maximising her experiences of pleasure and desired forms of sociality; noting that nights out clubbing with friends would involve:

lines of speed beforehand, and then taking [ecstasy] pills the rest of the night, dropping them [at] pre-timed intervals throughout the night.

Thus in constructing her drug use as a well-planned act of consumption she showed how the appropriation of these discourses makes it possible for her to be constructed as an expert consumer whose practices of consumption are governed by those ethics of self-monitoring, self-improvement, and self-regulation. This was a theme that emerged often throughout the data; conveying the understandable preference the participants had for these contemporary discourses.

When showing how these constructions of drugs as commodities or technologies that they actively and strategically consume can explicitly overturn charges of deviance and disorder, the benefits of adopting these ways of knowing about their conduct and subjectivities for participants were obvious:

For years I'd say "oh, I must be ADD, must be, must be, that's why I want to have amphetamines so badly, then I'm normal when I have them". But it's a croc of shit. It's a load of rubbish. There's no, um, ADD in me. I just like being awake when I want to be awake and if I want to be asleep, well I'll take the antipsychotics and piouuu, gone! I've changed my antipsychotics and I don't look like I've just had a big lot of smack now when I've had them.

Here, through the discourses of active citizenship, Helen constructed her use of both illicit drugs and prescribed medication as deliberate practices of consumption governed by an active interest in modifying herself in ways that are conducive to the roles she needs/wants to fulfil. What occurs through these constructions is a rejection of the implication that she uses substances because she suffers from attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder, and the establishment of her position as savvy consumer who is fully invested in the enterprise of self. Such benefits also occurred through her appropriation of the distinctly neoliberal discourse of self-surveillance, which is considered to be central to the successful performance of the project of self, and thus to the fulfilment of the requirements of neoliberal citizenship (see Vahabi & Gastaldo, 2003; Vaz & Bruno, 2003 for discussion). Indeed, in describing the way that she carefully monitors and deliberately modifies her use of antipsychotic medication to ensure that she is not overly sedated and instead remains alert and active, she showed how the appropriation of this particular contemporary discourses constructs her as someone who governs herself *through her drug use* and thus

contests her positioning as someone in who is in need of external regulation. This was also evident when she described her newfound preference for amphetamines over heroin:

It [speed] keeps me able to do the things that, 'cause I've been asleep for so long, I don't want to be asleep, I want to be awake and I want to be aware of what's going on around me.

In describing her preference for substances that maintain her awareness and vigilance over those that diminish her capacity to be alert and active, Helen thus conveyed a preference for these contemporary ways of knowing for the way that they construct both her conduct and her subjectivity as aligned with the norms and ethics of the active citizen. Again therefore, this illustrated the benefits that participants derived from constructing themselves as carrying out the obligations of the self-surveying, self-improving, and self-regulating citizen through their drug-using practices. Indeed, such ways of knowing were once again shown to contest automatic and authoritative constructions of the drug-using subject as inevitably undisciplined, unethical and thus as unentitled to citizenship.

Consistent with this, participants at other times appropriated these contemporary discourses in ways that constructed their use of illicit drugs as an act of consumption designed to manage or regulate difficult internal experiences. Management of threats to one's capacity to be healthy and productive is seen as central to the ethics of contemporary governance; contemporary liberal citizens are thus expected to survey and tend to their health and functioning in highly responsive and regulatory ways (Lupton, 1995; Petersen & Lupton, 1997). As Fraser (2010b) explains, contemporary systems of knowledge/power govern individuals via the requirement to "continually act to safeguard and enhance our health and our somatic integrity" (p. 548). In describing his use of cannabis as a deliberate act of consumption that he engages in to safeguard his mental health, Hamish showed how these discourses of consumption and biological citizenship (Fraser, 2010b; see also Rose, 2007a) make it possible for the act of illicit drug use to be constructed as a strategy through which one can fulfil this requirement to actively protect and maximise one's health:

It's management for a lot of other things as well, for past trauma and all that kind of stuff. I use it as a regular way to manage things.

Thus he showed how the discourses of active citizenship can make it possible to understand drug use as a practice through which certain norms and ethics (i.e., the adoption of a responsive and regulated approach to health) can be met. Such constructions of drugs as a 'solution' rather than 'problem' are typically reserved for categories of medically-prescribed substances (Moore, 2008), or other socially sanctioned substances that are more readily

framed as commodities (e.g., food, alcohol, sports drinks, natural supplements). Importantly however, Hamish showed how these discourses can also construct cannabis can as a useful commodity that can facilitate rather than hinder the tasks of citizenship. Importantly, then, he showed how these contemporary ways of knowing can position him as actively engaged in the ongoing monitoring and enhancement of his health that is required of contemporary citizens *through* his use of illicit drugs. Again, this made apparent the extent to which participants saw these contemporary ways of knowing about their illicit drug use and their subjectivities as a valuable resource through which they could reject inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising constructions of deviance and disorder and instead establish the grounds for being seen and treated as successful neoliberal citizens.

6.3.3 Creating true and expansive selves

Participants also appropriated the discourses of authenticity, self-discovery, and self-growth which are central to the performance of active citizenship to construct their illicit drug use and themselves in normative, successful terms. Indeed, through these discourses they constructed their drug use as a practice that assists them to be more authentic, more expansive, and more empowered in a variety of ways. Abby, for example, constructed her use of amphetamines as a practice that enabled her to live up to the ethic of authenticity:

I think for me amphetamines being the most enticing thing in terms of the sleep issue um, yeah anything else, I don't like the feeling of being on drugs, I don't like being stoned on pot, I don't like the feeling of ecstasy, I don't like feeling not myself. Amphetamines gave me the feeling of being more like myself, which I liked.

In talking about the way that her use of amphetamines gave her “the feeling of being more like myself”—not just in comparison to the un-self-like effects of other drugs, but in terms of its ability to restore her capacity to be alert, which is diminished by her narcolepsy—Abby constructed her drug use as a practice through which she could strive to maintain, or enhance, her authenticity. She thus showed how these discourses make it possible to construct her illicit drug use as a practice that facilitates rather than detracts from her ability to live up to the obligations of contemporary liberal governance. This is consistent with Rose’s (2007a) discussion of the way that the contemporary discourses of authenticity and self-development are increasingly used to construct certain prescribed medications as facilitative of these requirements of active citizenship – as providing “not promise a new self, but a return to the real self, or a realisation of the true self” (p.100; see also Olsen, 2009).

Further, at times participants drew on the contemporary discourses of selfhood and active citizenship to construct their illicit drug use as generating different, broadened experiences of self. For example, Sara commented that when presented with the opportunity to use methamphetamine for the first time:

I thought, oh well instead of being such a stickler, instead of being such a square all my life I may as well give it a go (...) And I found it did enjoy it.

In contrasting her use of methamphetamine with her typically cautious, risk-averse approach to life, Sara constructed her drug use as an act which facilitated the development of a more diversified, and potentially more rounded and fulfilled, self and thus as a form of conduct that through which she performed the enterprising selfhood that is required of neoliberal citizens. The way she constructed her use of methamphetamine as aligned with cultural values through the discourse of the active, self-improving citizen was consistent with Duff's (2008) description of the young drug users he spoke to in Melbourne, Australia who saw their drug use as having "helped facilitate...an experience of the self in which one approaches a sense of difference within oneself" and thus as an activity that had "helped them see a different side of themselves, or to understand themselves more fully" (p. 388). Such accounts thus show how these contemporary discourses of self-knowledge, self-fulfilment, and self-maximisation can benefit individuals who use illicit drugs by positioning them as living up to the ethics of active citizenship. In constructing her drug use as an active choice to relinquish rigid rules in order to access previously unavailable avenues of "enjoyment" and explore previously uncharted parts of herself (e.g., as not "such a stickler" or "square"), these contemporary ways of knowing afforded similar empowerment for Sara. Specifically, they constructed her as becoming a fuller version of herself, and hence as actively living up to the norms of neoliberal citizenship, *through* her use of methamphetamine.

The empowering effects of the appropriation of these discourses of active citizenship and contemporary selfhood were also evident in Lucy's description of how her use of illicit drugs has enabled her to achieve a more expansive and potentiated self:

I think a lot of people do when they're on drugs, you often have epiphanies or you join dots that you haven't joined before. And some of those have been really salient for me and I've actually taken them back into my non-drug-altered state. Like I said before it's made me realise that something's possible. And while obviously being off my face isn't sustainable (laughing) perhaps I can bring that back to my daily living and integrate it somehow.

Here she constructed her use of illicit drugs as a distinctly entrepreneurial activity which has contributed to the wealth of knowledge and experience that resource her project of self. Indeed, she described such conduct as having generated ground-breaking, “salient” realisations (e.g., “epiphanies”) that meaningfully enrich the way Lucy sees and acts upon herself, not just when intoxicated but also in her “daily living”. Through these contemporary discourses, then, Lucy’s drug use can be seen as an activity that equips her to live up to the ethic of reaching her full potential and hence can be seen in a manner which entitles her to be seen and treated as a normative subject who lives up to the requirements of neoliberal citizenship *through* her use of illicit drugs. Similarly, Lucy constructed her use of ecstasy in her late teens as not only a normative, but a transformative practice:

In the context of my life it was a really important, growthful time. I had been quite unhappy and despairing, lonely and disconnected for a long time and, I guess, me starting to use ecstasy coincided with me meeting my new boyfriend and all his friends who I got along with fantastically, and so our life was going out to clubs every weekend and part and parcel of that was dropping a pill or two.(...) I guess feeling a lack of inhibition that I hadn’t quite, hadn’t even dreamed was possible before, being in a crowded place with lots of people and just dancing because the music sounded and felt fantastic, um, it’s not something I think I could have experienced without ecstasy. Um, and I’ve often reflected on that over the years... I think for me it was a really important thing to, even if I needed chemical assistance to go there, it was really important for me to know that that place and that experience existed (...) [it gave me] something to then strive for when I was not off my face on something (laughing).

Constructed as facilitating rather than hindering her self-development and self-enrichment Lucy aligns her use of ecstasy at that time with the norms and values of the active citizen. Indeed, she drew on numerous contemporary discourses throughout this conversation; constructing her drug use as an activity generated greater self-awareness and social connection and therefore as a practice through which she fulfilled certain ethics of contemporary citizenship. Numerous researchers have shown these discourses of active citizenship and active selfhood can produce similarly empowering constructions of the acts and subjects of illicit drug use. For Hunt and Evan’s (2008) participants “ecstasy served as a catalyst for creating new possibilities in how they perceived and related to themselves and the world around them”, they thus “sought to capitalize on the experience of the drug and integrate these newfound sentiments and ways of relating to others into their everyday lives” (p. 342). Likewise, according to one of Zadjow’s (2010) participants, far from constructing illicit drug use as a deviant and or disordered behaviour which undermines the project of self, such conduct can be constructed as deliberate practice through which one can generate and/or realise “a better me” (p. 224).

Importantly however, what stood out in Lucy's appropriation of these discourses was that these ways of knowing made it possible for her to also construct her period of more frequent and problematic amphetamine use as consistent with the neoliberal values of authenticity and self-development. She explained that:

I don't think that times of difficulty or pain are a sign that things have gone wrong, I just think they're part of the spectrum of human experience and the difficult times are just as important as the good times and can be just as growthful (...) Um, it [regular methamphetamine use] felt like I guess it was compulsive at some level... Like I didn't feel I had control over it. Once again I realise that there's psychological theory that would say that's a sign that something's gone wrong. [But] I think I experienced some really important things, real depth and intensity of stuff that I wouldn't have been able to experience if I was straight for those 18 months. Um, I guess I'm kind of someone who wants to experience the whole gamut of human experience, even if it's difficult sometimes and can get me into trouble.

Here the appropriation of the discourses of the active citizen who is expected to invest in the project of self—to maximise their authenticity, their self-knowledge, their self-development—constructed Lucy's "compulsive" use of amphetamines in a manner that positions her as fulfilling rather than failing these tasks of neoliberal citizenship. Thus, in constructing her problematic use of methamphetamine as an activity through which she grew and improved as an individual (a construction which radically contests those which insist that such problematic forms of drug use signal in incapability and/or unwillingness to successfully engage in this project of self), Lucy highlighted the significant benefits that can be generated via such contemporary ways of knowing. Importantly, then, the way participants consistently formed these kinds of normalising constructions of their conduct and subjectivities—even in the context of aspects of their drug use and selves that do not readily align with normative categories—conveyed a preference for these ways of knowing for the way that they make it possible to contest deeply inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising constructions of their conduct and subjectivities and produce more adequate and more empowering understandings of what they do and who they are.

6.3.4 Pushing the boundaries

One of the key discourses of active citizenship is that of risk. However, contrary to the "no-risk society" ethos of more traditional welfarist modes of liberal government, the contemporary liberal discourse of risk does not establish risky practice as something to be entirely avoided but rather as "a source or condition of opportunity, an avenue for enterprise and the creation of wealth, and thus an unavoidable and invaluable part of a progressive environment" (O'Malley, 1996, p. 204). Indeed, the contemporary liberal worldview establishes certain forms of risk-taking as an entrepreneurial practice which

facilitate “self-actualisation and transformation” (Lupton & Tullock, 2002, p. 119). Thus, a key ethic of neoliberal citizenship is the differentiation of those risks that are best minimised and those that are best entered into because of their potential for maximising opportunities for self-fulfilment (Rose, 1996a). That is, within a contemporary liberal worldview the kind of risk management that is expected is not the complete eschewal of risk but the capacity to determine “which risk” to take (O’Malley, 1996, p. 204). Indeed, as Race (2005) points out, contemporary discourses make the suspension or “relaxation” of control over one’s conduct and emotions something that is not just “permissible” but is encouraged as a way of living up to the ideals of active citizenship (Governing Pleasure, para. 4). This contemporary formulation of risk was at times appropriated by participants to position themselves as normative, successful subjects who fulfil the ethics of self-growth and self-improvement through their use of illicit drugs. Specifically, at times they drew on these discourses to construct their conduct as an act of risk deliberately chosen for its potential to create opportunities for developing and improving their self-knowledge and self-control.

These contemporary notions of risk featured many times throughout Hamish’s interview. Through these discourses he constructed drug-using behaviours that are so automatically and authoritatively charged with deviance and disorder as practices through which the distinctly neoliberal ethic of self-transformation and self-growth can be performed. Indeed, through these contemporary notions of risk, Hamish constructed high-risk aspects of his drug use (in which he traversed the boundaries of safe/unsafe, controlled/uncontrolled conduct) as a practice of self (Foucault, 1988; see also Duff, 2008). Specifically, he constructed his riskier actions as deliberately chosen as a way of testing, and ultimately maximising, his capacity for self-control and hence as a way of consolidating his positioning as an autonomous, strong-willed, and disciplined subject. For example, he spoke about his parents’ long-term problematic drug use as something that:

inspires you to go a bit further I think, in some ways (...) Like a tendency to, to walk on the edge because I want to see if I can and survive. It’s like I almost want to see if I can get as far as my parents but not fuck it up.

He thus constructed his engagement riskier drug-using practices—those that are closer to “the edge” of problematic drug use—as enabling him to generate a sense of himself as strong and resilient in comparison to his parents. Thus, he showed how these contemporary ways of knowing make it possible for the kind of drug use that is automatically, authoritatively understood to be a manifestation of recklessness,

irresponsibility, irrationality, or ignorance (see chapters three and five) to be reconfigured as a deliberate practice through which Hamish tests his autonomy, his discipline, his risk-management skills in a manner that accords with the ethics of the enterprising self (Rose & Miller, 1992).

By appropriating these contemporary discourses of risk Hamish also aligned his riskier drug-using practices as align the neoliberal ethic of self-knowledge. Indeed, he showed how, through constructions of such conduct as activities that he deliberately engages in in order to challenge and refine his capabilities, the riskier aspects of his drug use can be understood as a practice through which he fulfils the requirements of constantly improved self-knowledge and self-mastery:

You hear all the stuff about heroin and, you know, and what it does to you, it gets the grips into you, and all that sort of stuff. And you watch people you love and respect sort of just destroy themselves... So I guess there's an element of, you know, [asking] "am I strong enough to do that and walk away? You know, is it really that powerful a drug?" (...) You know, I'm stronger and smarter than my stepdad so surely I could go where he can go and walk away unscathed, you know?

For Hamish, therefore, these contemporary ways of knowing constitute a powerful tool through which forms of drug use that are considered to be riskier (e.g., heroin use) can be configured as practices of the self through which he generates knowledge of himself as "strong", "smart" and having mastered the ability to maintain autonomy, even when using a drug that has "powerful" effects. Indeed, he clearly valued the way such constructions make it possible for him to be positioned as an entrepreneurial subject who is prepared to take such risks in the interest of making such gains. Ultimately, then, he showed how these discourses can position him as capable of and willing to live up to the expectations of active citizenship, which require citizens to not only "govern themselves" but also to also "master themselves" (Rose, 1996a, p. 45).

As is evident in the way it refigures certain types of risk as a source of opportunity, the worldview of contemporary liberal culture attaches paradoxical expectations to the concept of self-control. While the successful neoliberal citizen is expected to be moderate, regulated, and disciplined, they are also expected to avoid acting in ways that are too bounded or restricted (Crawford, 1994; Featherstone, 1991; Lupton & Tulloch, 2002; Pajari, Jallinoja, & Absetz, 2006; Race, 2005). People who use illicit drugs have elsewhere been shown to draw on such contemporary discourses to construct their illicit drug use as consistent with these twin ethics of disciplined pleasure and calculated, entrepreneurial risk, describing their drug use as controlled loss of control (Duff, 2008; Green & Moore,

2009; Hunt & Evans, 2008; Moore, 1992; Pennay, 2012; Pennay & Moore, 2010; Riley et al., 2010; Zadjow, 2010). Some participants drew on these contemporary discourses in a similar fashion; constructing their drug use as a practice through which they can be seen as striking the right balance between discipline and pleasure:

... 'cause sometimes I enjoy losing control a little bit. That's part of it sometimes. I just like to be out of it for a bit. But not always, 'cause otherwise you end up looking like an idiot, you know?

Scott thus showed that by drawing on the intersecting discourses of disciplined pleasure and consumption, autonomy, and self-surveillance to construct his illicit drug use he can contest the way that such diminished control is so automatically and authoritatively constructed in stigmatising and marginalising terms. Indeed, in constructing his drug use as a voluntary and temporary suspension of control Scott's appropriation of these contemporary discourses produced such conduct as a practice through which he meets both the paradoxical expectations neoliberal citizenship establishes when it comes to self-control. As Race (2005) explains, the ethic of "calculated hedonism" (Featherstone, 1991, p. 59) that has emerged with the transition from liberal to neoliberal governance has made "normative" the "relaxation of emotional controls – one that allows for greater exploration of the expressive and the experiential" whilst maintaining the expectation that the individual remain "responsible for reigning these back in" (Race, 2005, *Governing Pleasure*, para. 4). Scott clearly valued the way these contemporary discourses made it possible for him to be constructed as maintaining this delicate balance of ethics through his use of illicit drugs; valuing the fact that such constructions position him as living up to these two requirements of neoliberal citizenship. Indeed, being able to be constructed as successfully traversing these boundaries of "liberation and restraint" (Race, 2005, *Governing Pleasure*, para. 3) arguably establishes greater potential to be seen as successfully performing the ethics self-surveillance and self-regulation than if one maintained a risk-averse stance to life in which any suspension or relaxation of control was avoided. Scott's comments thus provided a powerful example of the kinds of benefits participants saw as arising from these contemporary ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects. Such comments showed how the intertwining discourses of risk, autonomy and consumption can so effectively contest charges and positions of deviance and disorder and establish the grounds for people who use illicit drugs to be seen and treated as capable of and willing continually challenge, monitor, and discipline themselves in all those ways that are expected of the successful neoliberal citizen.

6.3.5 Summary

In the findings outlined in this section it is evident that participants overwhelmingly saw the language of the entrepreneurial self as the most appropriate and beneficial way to construct their conduct and subjectivities. This apparent preference for such contemporary ways of knowing was based on the capacity for such ways of knowing to produce constructions that are not only more in keeping with the realities of their conduct and subjectivities, but which establish their eligibility to be seen and treated as successful neoliberal citizens – not *despite* of their use of illicit drugs but *through* their engagement in such conduct. Extending on previous research (Gowan et al., 2012; Jauffret-Routside, 2009; Keane, 2003; Moore, 2009; Moore & Fraser, 2006; Tammi & Hurme, 2007), these findings thus provided powerful examples of the political benefits these contemporary ways of knowing can generate. Indeed, it was clear that the participants saw these contemporary discourses as the *solution* to the charges of deviance and disorder levelled at them via the automatic and authoritative constructions outlined in chapter five. Throughout the interviews participants consistently and comprehensively conveyed how, contrary to constructions of their conduct and subjects as epitomising “the antithesis of the proper administration of the self” (Race, 2005, *Recreational States*, para. 5), these contemporary discourses make it possible for certain drug-using practices and drug-using subjects to be constructed as practices through which one can perform the *ideal* administration of the self. Importantly, then, the way participants drew on these discourses to establish the grounds for being seen as capable of and willing to perform the ethics of active citizenship not just despite of but *through* their use of illicit drugs made the case for their preference in these discursive ways of knowing even more substantial. Indeed, these instances throughout the data made the value participants placed on these contemporary discourses even more apparent and intelligible. Showing how such contemporary discourses make it possible for them to be aligned with the norms and ethics of neoliberal citizenship through the act of illicit drug use, such instances made apparent the extent to which the participants saw these discursive ways of knowing as having the potential to bring into effect broad and powerful benefits, especially in the context of such pronounced and pervasive constructions of deviance and disorder.

6.4 Citizenship through others

The most striking finding that emerged at this level of worldview/discourse was the way that the participants also constructed what they do and who they are as aligned with the norms and values of neoliberal citizenship by contrasting their conduct and subjectivities with drug-using practices and subjects that are *other* to these norms and

values. Indeed, early on in the data collection and analysis it became apparent that participants saw these contemporary ways of knowing as making it possible to align their conduct and subjectivities with the norms and values of neoliberal citizenship, and reject charges of deviance and disorder, *through the construction of unhealthy, undisciplined, unproductive, unethical drug-using practices and subjects*. Critically therefore, it became apparent that although the participants voiced considerable concern about the way that the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are so automatically and authoritatively constructed as deviant and/or disordered, in adopting discursive ways of knowing as the solution to these problems *the participants also took part in the reproduction of certain drug-using practices and subjects in precisely these terms*.

The deeper implications of this finding for participants are discussed in chapter seven, as these implications became particularly apparent through the analysis of the less conscious, more emotive dimensions of what they had to say. And the broader implications of this finding are discussed in chapter eight, where I draw together the findings from each level of analysis, along with those from the analysis of news-media texts, to raise important questions about the ways of knowing in/through which illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are constructed. Importantly however what stood out from the vantage point of this third level of analysis were the obvious benefits the participants derived from this discursive practice of aligning their conduct with the norms and values of the normative, active citizen by constructing other drug-using practices and subjects in terms of deviance and disorder. As the findings presented below demonstrate, participants valued this practice for the way that it generated a sense of reassurance and/or empowerment, as it was clear when participants drew out such constructions of deviance and disorder that they saw such othering as making it possible to establish their own autonomy, restraint, rationality, responsibility, active investment in the enterprise of self, and so forth.

Thus the analysis of what the participants had to say about discursive ways of knowing showed that not only did they see the adoption of the discourses of neoliberal citizenship as an appropriate and effective way to address the problems of inadequate, stigmatising, and marginalising constructions of what they do and who they are, but that they saw the practice of identity work as an important tool through which these benefits can be produced. Identity work refers to the “discursive separation of ‘self’ from the ‘other’” that is necessarily “an intrinsic part of the process” of identity construction because “who we are is intimately connected to notions of who we are *not* and, by implication, who others are (and are not)” (Ybema et al., 2009, p. 306, emphasis original; see also Alvesson &

Wilmott, 2002; Crawford, 1994; Ezzell; 2009; Gagnon, 2008; Leisenring, 2006). As Crawford (1994) explains, such dividing practices (see Foucault, 1979) are so central to the process of identity construction because in order to produce and take up normative positions (i.e., the healthy subject) discourses necessarily produce and assign positions of other (i.e., the diseased other) (see chapters seven and eight for further discussion). He emphasises therefore that the function of the discursive practice of identity work is to be protected from being positioned as other and thus safeguard one's normative positioning:

Identity work—protecting or reformulating self boundaries, reinforcing images or reimagining the other—is required of people as they respond to fears of contagion and stigma, as they adopt strategies to protect themselves from *implication*, that is, symbolic connection to “infected” others and the negative characteristics ascribed to them (Crawford, 1994, p. 1348, emphasis original).

Thus identity work is a way for individuals to “manage” their identity “in ways that promote a sense of self-worth and affirmation” (Ezzell, 2009, p. 125).

For participants these notions of protection from otherness, affirmation, and empowerment seemed to lie at the heart of what they had to say about the discourses of neoliberal citizenship and, as is outlined below, it was obvious that for them this practice of identity work was a key tool through which this benefit of protection could be produced. Indeed, the way that they contrasted their conduct and subjectivities with constructions of drug-using practices and subjects that depart from the norms and values of contemporary liberal citizenship made this apparent, as each time they articulated these contrasts made apparent the reassurance and empowerment this afforded them. That is, as the examples presented below illustrate, it was apparent that these contrasts emerged so often in what they participants had to say because of claims of legitimacy and inclusion they afforded them.

6.4.1 Reassurance through others

At a cultural level, constructions of the deviant and disordered drug-using other are understood to constitute a collective form of identity work, as the positioning of such subjects in these terms of otherness enables us to achieve a collective sense of confidence by way of contrast (Manderson, 2005, 2011) (see chapter eight for detailed discussion of this process). At an individual level, research has shown that identity work functions as a practice through which individuals can derive a sense of “reassurance” and “peace of mind” about who or what they are (Lupton, McCarthy & Chapman, 1995, p. 177; see also

Crawford, 1994; Gagnon, 2008; Ybema et al., 2011). Consistent with this, many participants spoke directly about the sense of reassurance that they derive from comparing what they do and who they are with other drug-using practices and subjects.

Ash, for example, explicitly described finding it reassuring to compare the consequences of his dexamphetamine use with the more severe impacts of his peers' methamphetamine use, who he noticed often encountered financial problems and appeared unhealthy (looking tired, with "bad skin"):

'At least I'm not doing THAT', you know? It was sort of a, yeah, sort of a reassurance to myself or something, like, 'it could have been worse'.

This process of contrasting the impacts of his friends' methamphetamine use on their financial stability, appearance, and health with the lesser impacts of his own dexamphetamine use, was obviously a source of "reassurance" for Ash. This highlighted then that it was *through such constructions of unhealthy and undisciplined others* that he saw himself as a healthy, disciplined, and thus normative. Similarly, Hamish spoke about the comparisons he drew between the restraint he exercised in his own injecting drug use and the risky forms of conduct that other injecting drug users he had spoken to were involved in as reassuring, as these contrasts enabled him to see his own conduct as:

sort of safer, in a way. 'Cause I knew, I'd been hearing all these stories of, you know, when it goes wrong, so to speak. So what I was doing was, I guess, lower risk. If you're talking to, you know, 18 year old people who are selling sex for shots and things like that, what I was doing essentially wasn't that bad.

As it did for Ash, therefore, drawing out such constructions of deviant and disordered drug-using practices and drug-using subjects enabled Hamish to reject implications of stigma and marginalisation and instead position his own conduct and subjectivity in more normative terms. Nate derived the same benefits from this process of juxtaposing his drug use with that of other drug users whose drug-using practices "were worse" (i.e., riskier, more harmful, less acceptable, etc.) than his own:

I honestly didn't see myself as that bad because there was people that were worse than me, that were doing harder drugs that had more impact.

In such interactions, therefore, it was not only evident that the participants placed importance on constructing their conduct and subjectivities as aligned with the norms and values of health, risk management, self-discipline, and so forth, but it was also evident that one of the avenues through which these reassuring or reaffirming constructions are

produced is the construction of other drug-using subjects as unhealthy, irresponsible, undisciplined, and so forth.

Indeed, Hamish spoke of constructions of deviance and disorder as a device through which he maintains his sense of himself as autonomous, responsible, healthy, and normative and hence can be protected from such positions of otherness:

Hamish: I've got a big gauge of what not to do, a big fucking red button: 'don't go there'.

Laura: and what does that look like?

Hamish: that looks like, um... well if you are working, going to the pub on Friday, and coming home the following Friday spending all the rent money and putting it in a needle up your arm essentially

Laura: ok

Hamish: so, you know, being a terrible father, being a horrible husband, domestic violence, heroin use, selling drugs out of the house... all that kind of stuff

Laura: ok. So it's about the use (...) having such an impact on

Hamish: other people

Laura: their external world and the people around them

Hamish: that's exactly right

Laura: that's what takes it too far

Hamish: yeah. And also if you just, if you're self-destructing I guess as well you know...even if you're not hurting anyone else but you're... just sort of throwing your life down the gutter you know... so... your health and all that as well.

In describing how he regulates his conduct through this detailed catalogue of “what not to do”, Hamish also conveyed how such constructions of deviance and disorder operate as a point of comparison against which he regularly inventories the numerous ways in which what he does and who he is align with the norms and values of responsibility, self-discipline, and self-development. Thus in talking about this “big fucking red button” Hamish not only constructed what he does and who he is in terms of active, successful citizenship but also showed how these normalising constructions of himself and his conduct are produced in/through these comparisons. This was more explicitly conveyed elsewhere in his interview, where he described deriving a “sense of satisfaction” and “personal pride” when comparing his cannabis use with his flatmate’s cannabis use:

It's really interesting living with Gus. Where when we'd run out he'd get really frantic and make all kinds of phone calls and be prepared to go to, you know, quite great lengths and pay exorbitant amounts of money for small amounts, just to have it, just to be stoned, whereas I, yeah in the last 3 or 4 years, just totally haven't had that mentality. It's just, yeah, when it sort of runs out it's almost like me saying “well that's like a good reason to have a little break”. Like, it's not desperate (...) Yeah, there is a certain sense of satisfaction of watching someone else sort of be all (tensing up, stressing) while you're not, knowing that you smoke as much as them. It's the same with cigarettes. Like, I've smoked pretty heavily this year, like,

sometimes a pack a day, but I can go two days without a cigarette and it doesn't bother me. Like, I don't feel that need. So, I guess there's a certain sense of personal pride in it, of not feeling that desperation, doesn't feel like it's quite got its claws into me.

It was evident, then, that Hamish saw the discourses of autonomy and self-discipline as an appropriate and effective way to contest a host of charges of deviance and disorder (such as compulsion, irrationality, and irresponsibility) and establish his alignment with the neoliberal subject. Critically, however this interaction highlighted that these benefits are often produced in/through the reproduction of constructions of the undisciplined (i.e., “frantic”) and compulsive (i.e., “feeling that desperation” when running out of a substance) drug-using subject.

In the following conversation with Lee, these reassuring benefits were likewise produced in/through the reproduction of deviant and/or disordered drug-using subjects:

We don't all rip our family off, or anybody off, or we don't not pay rent or live on the streets, where they assume most of us do. Like, I still pay rent, I still have food in my cupboard, I still have my daughter in school, I still get my daughter to school 5 days a week, I still pick her up 5 days a week, but I use drugs as well. But I don't think she's got any different sort of upbringing than what anybody, any other child does, except for that while she's at school I use drugs.

The appropriation of discourses of the ‘good citizen’ and ‘good parent’ who regulates their conduct according to ethics of social accountability, financial responsibility, and responsible parenting was clearly seen by Lee to be an appropriate and effective way to reject numerous charges of marked otherness, such as untrustworthiness, chaos/instability, and poor parenting. Through these discourses she constructed herself as a normative citizen who successfully meets her social, financial and parenting responsibilities. Again however, these normalising constructions and the reassuring approximation of the neoliberal subject occurred through the reproduction of a host of inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising constructions of disreputable and irresponsible drug-using subjects.

Likewise, Lucy spoke about the process of comparing herself against constructions of the deviant and disordered “weed smoker” as not only a key practice through which she regulates her conduct but is also a practice through which she is reassured of her positioning as approximate to the successful neoliberal subject:

Lucy: I guess now I come to think of it in a way, hmm that's interesting... there seems to be a fine balance for me between I'm allowed to keep smoking weed IF I maintain all these other aspects of my life that somehow seem contrary to the kind of person that would smoke weed.

Laura: ok

Lucy: so in terms of being high functioning, yeah, successful, intelligent, achievement-oriented. Yeah I'd never thought of that before (...) so I guess I'm allowed to smoke weed so long as I don't seem to be a weed-smoker (...) someone sitting on a couch in front of the TV probably, actually playing x-box or something like that. Um, someone who doesn't eat well, or does a lot of take-out, eats a lot of junk. Someone who hangs out with the same, very insular group of friends who are weed-smokers. Um, someone who finds it difficult to get up in the mornings or to get motivated.

Thus again, it was apparent here that the benefits of these contemporary ways of knowing arose out of the practice of identity work, and through the attendant reproduction of stigmatising and marginalising constructions of the inactive, unproductive, unhealthy, unmotivated cannabis user. Indeed, Lucy explicitly described this practice as offering her recourse to protect against these stigmatising and marginalising ways in which her daily cannabis use is automatically and authoritatively constructed. Specifically, she detailed how such comparisons reassure her of her own intelligence, achievement-oriented approach to life, and successful level of “functioning”. It was clear therefore that she sees such identity work as affording the significant benefit of feeling more at ease with her drug use and as enabling her to see her conduct as permissible rather than unacceptable – a benefit which is likely to have the corresponding effect of establishing a sense of herself as acceptable in ways that reassure her of her eligibility to claim legitimacy and inclusion.

Importantly therefore, the way participants spoke about this process indicated that they saw it as not only reassuring them of their normativity, but as also affording them the power to credibly claim legitimacy and inclusion. As Lucy put it:

There's all these different characteristics that, the stereotype of what a stoner is, and I'm not like that so it can't be that bad. Like, it gives you the power to de-identify from that stereotype.

Indeed, the way that they drew out these contrasts made it apparent that the participants saw this practice as making available “the power” to reject the applicability of inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising constructions of what they do and who they are.

Simultaneously, it was apparent that they saw this discursive process as affording them the power to construct their conduct and subjectivities in the more adequate, normalised, legitimating terms of neoliberal citizenship. Ultimately therefore, as is discussed next, participants seemed to value this discursive practice for the empowerment it afforded them.

6.4.2 Empowerment through others

Participants frequently established their alignment with the neoliberal subject by contrasting what they do and who they are with unenterprising, unproductive, undisciplined drug-using acts and subjects, which made apparent their impression of these ways of knowing and the dividing practices in/through which they are produced as affording them greater social and cultural legitimacy. This was evident in the way that Bill spoke of his peers' indifference towards the impact of their drug use on not just their autonomy but their productivity:

I guess I saw some of my friends, like uh, when I used to do drugs I had a pretty good control on it, but I mean you see some people that don't, you know. They're just kind of, yeah, it just, it just slowly creeps up, before you know it is, yeah. It's kind of a scary thing like going back and seeing friends (...) they just kind of accept that they don't [have control] (...) I mean it just, it kind of scared me. I just kind of thought, like, there's got to be more to life.

Commenting on the way that his peers "just kind of accept" a lack of autonomy and the way this diminishes their capacity to adopt a productive, enterprising approach to life established Bill's own enterprising citizenship. Drawing out this contrast between his friends' ostensible inability or unwillingness to adopt an active and enterprising approach to what they do and who they are and his own investment in looking for "more to life" positioned Bill as the kind of normative, successful subject who adopts an active and enterprising orientation to life and thus who, unlike his peers, lives up to the norms and values of contemporary liberal citizenship. His comments thus conveyed the legitimating and empowering benefits that this reproduction of the compulsive, unenterprising drug-using subject can afford; a point that was similarly made at other points throughout his interview:

I grew up in a country town where, like, a lot of people live like, you know, kind of like menial kind of jobs, you know, and it's kind of almost accepted, you know what I mean? I think, I think the drugs have a lot to do with people like staying in those kind of jobs. Like, you know, I guess all my friends they all smoke pot and they're all just happy working their dead-end jobs, they don't really care, you know?

Again therefore, Bill expressed concerns about the apparent indifference of other drug-using subjects to the structural disadvantages they face, and thus their lack of concern with the ethic of living full, enriched lives in order to construct his own conduct and self in empowering terms. Specifically, such expressions positioned Bill as adopting an enterprising stance towards his life and self, and thus as being someone who successfully governs himself in the ways expected of neoliberal citizens occurred in/through his. Thus

the benefits of these contemporary ways of knowing were once again shown to arise through the construction of others who fail to live up to the expectation that the active citizen continuously strive to improve oneself and maximise opportunities in life.

In discussing how the lengths that some other drug users go to in order to obtain drugs compare to the limits he sets around his own efforts to obtain drugs, Max likewise conveyed how empowering benefits can be afforded via constructions of undisciplined drug-using practices. Specifically, he drew out constructions of illicit drug use that implicate a compromised capacity to adopt an enterprising approach to self:

I don't want to lose my morals over it. I won't do anything that, you know like steal, crime, any of that, I won't do any of that for my drug habit (...) I've learned to control it, so I don't have to go out and do that. Like if I ain't got it, I ain't got the money, I just say no. See, I can always get it on tick and things like that... but I keep that to a minimum, so I don't, so the kids don't miss out. (...) They look up to me, so I can't really go overboard

It was clear, then, that Max saw such constructions of the compulsive, irresponsible drug-using subject as a readily available and appropriate recourse through which he could be constructed as autonomous and as successfully maintaining his moral standards and meeting his parental responsibilities. More than this however, this contrast between his capacity to exercise some restraint in relation to his drug use and constructions of other drug-using subjects as lacking such constraint established Max's investment in being the best parent and the best citizen he can be (i.e., as establishing his enterprising selfhood and citizenship). Indeed, it was evident in what he said that this practice of drawing out the ways that his conduct differs from that of individuals who "steal", engage in other forms of "crime" and get into debt with dealers in order to maintain their "drug habit" enables Max to see himself, in the context of his use of amphetamines, as always working on the goal of being a good role model for his children and thus as adhering to the ethic of investing in the project of being the best version of oneself. Once again, the reproduction of the deviant and disordered others was shown here to afford Max with the power to construct his conduct and subjectivity in normalising and legitimating terms.

Max made this same point elsewhere in his interview. This time showing how constructions of reckless, irresponsible drug-using subjects, in contrast with his own responsible injecting practices, afford him the power to be constructed as a normative neoliberal citizen who governs himself according to the ethic of caring for self and others:

An addict I describe as someone that, they don't care, they'll throw their [injecting] shit everywhere, they don't care who they hurt in the process, where I do. I won't throw my stuff anywhere. It's just common sense isn't it? How can you lose that? It doesn't matter what you're on you've still got common sense.

As Fraser and valentine (2009) write, a key practice through which individuals are expected to govern themselves in contemporary liberal culture is responsibility for the care of self and others by actively making “choices for their own good and the public good” (p. 60). Max illustrates how constructions of irrational, irresponsible drug-using subjects who are incapable of or unwilling to exercise the “common-sense” necessary to take responsibility for ensuring their own good or the good of those around them by safely discarding of their injecting equipment empower him to be constructed as the successful neoliberal subject who engages in injecting practices that adhere to rather than eschew such ethics. Thus again he spoke about the benefits of greater legitimacy and inclusion as derived not only through the appropriation contemporary discourses but as simultaneously produced in/through the construction of subjects have ostensibly lost the capacity to govern themselves according to the basic or “common” rationalities and sensibilities of liberal culture.

A particularly noteworthy example of this was the following conversation with Chris, in which he spoke frankly about his dependent use of heroin and his involvement in crime to “support” his “habit” but contrasted the way that he regulates such conduct according to strict “morals” and maintains an active interest or investment in caring about how he conducts himself with the apparent immorality and indifference of other drug-using subjects:

Laura: so do you feel like you've experienced that, where people have lumped you into one category just because you use drugs?

Chris: yeah court systems, yeah. Oh as I said, I don't blame them in a way, but you know what I mean? In a way I do, you know what I mean? Like every single person their case is different, but, we all do do crime to support our habits, we all do things we regret, most of us don't have much of a family life, so yeah. (...) A junkie right will rip off his own mother, will do what, you know what I mean, he's got no morals, you know what I mean? A user is someone that does have morals, you know what I mean? Which goes out earns money every day to be able to support their habit, alright? Yeah alright there's two different categories, but they do blend into each other, because there is a thin line between both. Like a user as soon as they lose that job, do whatever, they're on a gram a day habit you know what I mean, what are they going to do to support that habit?

Laura: so they then might start to do some things that are more typical of the junkie category?

Chris: exactly. And that's how they basically blend and that's how society looks at it.

Laura: yeah. But is that, just because someone might start to do some of the things that are typical of the junkie character let's say, does that mean they are actually

Chris: no, but it depends how far they go with it (...) you've got to always have morals, yeah? You know what I mean? Like, as soon as you throw those morals out the window, you may as well just throw it in.

Laura: sure, and even though sometimes you might do things that you might regret its still, you've still got that moral framework(...) do you think there are people who don't have those kind of morals?

Chris: I know there is. I mean there's people who don't give a fuck about anything. But there's a lot of people that do, you know?

Although Chris took up numerous positions throughout this conversation, the prominent threads concerned his rejection of absolute deviance and disorder and claims of his eligibility to be seen and treated in terms of legitimacy. Again, such rejections of otherness and claims of legitimacy evidently occurred via the process of contrasting his approach to his drug use with constructions of those drug-using subjects who “don't give a fuck about anything” and thus conduct themselves with no regard for themselves or others. In/through this contrast Chris was able to construct himself as someone who maintains active efforts to adhere to certain moral standards and to the ethics of caring for self and others whilst engaging in socially unacceptable conduct. Thus, in keeping with the examples presented so far, Chris seemed to value these discursive ways of knowing for generating a sense of empowerment and legitimacy even though aspects of his conduct are difficult to reconcile with prominent social and cultural norms and values.

In a similar example, Helen established the grounds for being positioned as an active and legitimate citizen whilst also being positioned as having “a drug problem” by contrasting her approach to illicit drug use with constructions of other drug-using subjects as adopting an irresponsible, careless approach:

Well, yes I have a drug problem. Yes I used to put junk in my veins, yes I did that. But I'm not a useless junkie, because a useless junkie is a, someone who just doesn't care what sort of, whether they use clean instruments or not. And, you know, I always had standards. Always.

She thus clearly saw such contemporary discourses and the associated practice of identity work as having empowering effects. Helen constructed herself as living up to the ethic of adopting and maintaining an active stance to the welfare of oneself and others by way of

contrast against constructions of other drug-using subjects as careless and thus as failing to adhere to this ethic. As with those presented above, this interaction thus made evident the legitimacy that Helen was afforded via the practice of marking out certain subjects (e.g., “the useless junkie”) as failing to actively govern themselves according to social and cultural “standards”. She thus clearly saw these stigmatising and marginalising constructions as bringing into focus her capacity to “always” govern her conduct and themselves according to these norms, values and ethics, and thus as facilitating her approximation of the neoliberal subject.

As well as through the active adoption of an enterprising and responsible stance towards conduct, to be positioned as a successful neoliberal citizen also requires the individual to actively adopt an enterprising and responsible stance to their health. As Greco (1993) describes, “physical health has come to represent, for the neo-liberal individual who has ‘chosen’ it, an ‘objective’ witness to his or her suitability to function as a free and rational agent” (p. 370). Thus one’s eligibility or “suitability” to be positioned as a successful neoliberal citizen is determined by the extent to which they live up to the imperative to be healthy (i.e., the extent to which they actively invest in safeguarding and maximising their health by making ‘good’ choices) (Lupton, 1995). Again, by making it possible to construct their own adherence to this imperative of health, it was apparent that participants saw constructions of the unhealthy practices of other drug-using subjects as giving them the power to be positioned as legitimate citizens. Lee, for example, spoke about her health-conscious approach to injecting drug use (i.e., using “clean” injecting equipment) and healthy status (as not infected with hepatitis C) as contrasting with the unhealthy approach (i.e., reusing injecting equipment) and status (i.e., hepatitis C positive) of other drug-using subjects:

I might be a drug user, but I’m a clean drug user. I don’t reuse my needles. I don’t pick up a needle in the street and use it. Like, that’s the difference between a user and a junkie if you ask me. But everybody thinks that if you use, you’ve got hep C. And I don’t really like that, because I don’t have hep C, and I’ve been using for 10 years.

Once again, therefore, for Lee differentiating herself as “a clean drug user” in contrast to those ‘unclean’ and unhealthy drug users was something she saw as enabling her to contest positions of deviance and disorder and instead be constructed as living up to the imperative to adopt an active, responsible stance towards her health.

Nate also conveyed these benefits as arising in/through the construction of unhealthy others. The way he compared his choice to use amphetamines with the choice of

others to use alcohol showed that he saw such differentiations as establishing his positioning as someone who actively adheres to the imperative to be healthy:

... 'cause alcohol contributes so much to peoples injuries, health problems, drugs - that didn't justify it - but gave it a bit of, you know, 'well, I'm not drinking', you know, 'well, I'm not a drunk, I'm not like going to be drunk and destroy my body', you know?

By explicitly constructing himself as someone who, unlike other drug-using subjects, is unprepared to “destroy [his] body” it was evident that Nate sees such contrasts as affording him the power to be positioned as someone who governs their conduct and themselves according to the imperative of health (Lupton, 1995). In making such comments therefore he conveyed the legitimacy he gains in/through the construction of his choice to use amphetamines as a ‘healthier’ choice (i.e., as contributing less “injuries, health problems”) in contrast with the choice to drink alcohol. Such constructions enabled him to reject the applicability of charges of deviance and disorder and simultaneously to establish the alignment of his conduct and self with a key ethic through which eligibility to be seen and treated as a full, legitimate citizen is determined (Greco, 1993).

6.4.3 Summary

This final set of findings that emerged at the level of worldview/discourse highlighted the extent to which the participants saw these contemporary ways of knowing as an appropriate, viable and valuable alternative to the inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising constructions produced at the levels of litany and socio-structural conditions. More than this however, they highlighted the extent to which the participants saw the normalising and legitimising benefits of these contemporary ways of knowing as coming about in/through the practice of contrasting their own conduct and subjectivities with constructions of ‘deviant’ and ‘disordered’ drug-using practices and subjects. Indeed, as the above examples illustrate, it was evident that the participants saw the reproduction of such constructions of deviant and disordered others as affording them the power to be aligned with the neoliberal subject and hence to attain greater legitimacy and inclusion. Thus the emergence of these findings made it apparent that although the participants predominantly rejected accounts stigmatising and marginalising accounts of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects as deviant and/or disordered they did not contest them as entirely inapplicable, but rather contested the applicability of these constructions to their own practices and selves. Given that the very function of identity work is to protect against implications of otherness (Crawford, 1994) and the level of concern participants expressed about being seen and treated as other due to their use of illicit drugs, this finding does not

seem unexpected. Critically however, it did highlight that although the participants voiced significant objections to charges of marked otherness, in adopting these dividing practices as recourse for attaining legitimacy and inclusion they also placed value on these charges, and hence took part in reproducing these stigmatising and marginalising understandings of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects. What emerged here therefore echoes with Ezzell's (2009) findings regarding the paradoxical outcomes of the "defensive othering" of that characterised the identity work of the female athletes he interviewed:

The women did not create the conditions of inequality under which they acted, nor did they create the devalued identities imposed on them. Understandably, they managed their identities in ways that promoted a sense of self-worth and affirmation. However, their solution to the identity dilemmas they faced reinforced the stigmatizing power of the devalued identities they sought to deflect (pp. 124-125).

6.5 Discursive practices: A preferable but not ideal approach

Although the participants did not explicitly speak of a preference for these discursive ways of knowing, this was made abundantly apparent in the ways that they extensively drew on such ways of knowing when speaking about their conduct and subjectivities. The basis for this seemed to be the greater (although not unrestricted) capacity for negotiating different knowledges and subjectivities (i.e., for the rejection and adoption of different accounts and subject positions) that such ways of knowing generate compared to those at the levels of litany and socio-structural conditions. Indeed, it was very clear throughout the analysis that the participants valued the appropriation of the discourses of neoliberal citizenship when constructing what they do and who they are. They clearly saw such discourses as generating understandings that more adequately map onto the realities of their conduct and subjectivities, and as establishing the grounds for them to contest positions of deviance and disorder and thus reclaim their eligibility to be seen and treated as normative, successful subjects. This was evident in the way that they extensively and innovatively drew on the language of the neoliberal subject who is active and enterprising in their own government. Doing so showed the extent to which participants saw such language as an accessible and culturally salient platform from which they could simultaneously contest automatic and authoritative charges of deviance and disorder and establish their legitimacy as normative, successful citizens – be it by constructing themselves as autonomous, responsible, and disciplined despite their use of illicit drugs or by innovatively constructing themselves as enterprising and authentic subjects whose drug

use constitutes a deliberate practice through which they live up to the contemporary ethic of engaging in strategic consumption and risk in order to enrich their lives and selves.

Critically however, the findings also highlighted how the normalising and legitimating benefits of these contemporary ways of knowing occurred in/through the reproduction of accounts of deviant and disordered drug-using practices and subjects. This finding was thus perhaps the most important to emerge at this level of analysis, as it made visible the limits to the benefits of these discursive ways of knowing. That is, this finding highlighted that although these discursive ways of knowing made available this recourse to contest implications of deviance and disorder levelled at their own conduct and subjectivities, this alternative approach did not have the effect of contesting such implications more broadly as it, in fact, reproduced them. Thus, it seemed that the participants' adoption of these ways of knowing as the solution to the inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising ways that they and their conduct are constructed via more automatic and structured ways of knowing had the effect of reassigning rather than disassembling these shortcomings.

It is this paradoxical limitation to which I turn to next in presenting the findings from the final level of analysis. It is important to note however that this limitation was something that some participants expressed concern about. Sam, for example, acknowledged that although constructing her conduct and subjectivity in normalising and empowering terms through the contrasting her conduct and subjectivity with 'others' makes her "feel better", it is "hard to do" because it:

makes you judge other people more. It's like I think 'oh well at least I don't rah rahrah' or 'at least I don't do this' you know? You just kind of try and pick things about people that don't smoke [cannabis] and just think 'well look at them, you know, I don't do that'. You know what I mean? You just kind of judge, compare yourself to other people and pick the bad things that they do and say 'well I don't do that, so I'm alright', you know?(...) Which is horrible again 'cause, you know, you don't want to be putting other people down just to make yourself feel better.

Likewise, when talking about the benefits afforded in/through this approach to constructing what he does and who he is Bill stated that:

It almost feels like your success - it's the whole yin yang concept - your success is someone else's failure.

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Some participants thus seemed to hold a sense of conflict around the adoption of these ways of knowing to construct what they do and who they; suggesting that their preference for these ways of knowing as appropriate *and effective* was not unreserved.

Critically however, as Sam noted:

because there's stereotypes on what drug using is, everybody tries not to be the stereotype.

She thus made the point that although these ways of knowing might have such limitations, these limitations must be weighed up against the need to “not be the stereotype” – that is, the need to be protected from implications of deviance and disorder and the marked stigma, marginalisation and dehumanisation that such implications generate (see chapters three and five). Perhaps, then, the participants’ preference for these discursive ways of knowing did not necessarily reflect their sense of these as generating understandings and approaches that are *entirely* satisfactory. Rather, given the imposing and understandable need for some capacity to contest the marked stigma and marginalisation they so automatically and authoritatively encounter, and to attain the legitimacy to be seen and treated as citizens (or, indeed, as people), perhaps this preference reflected the participants’ sense that these ways of knowing constitute *the best recourse available to them*. There was thus a level of complexity and paradox that underlay what the participants had to say about these discursive ways of knowing. It was this problem of the limited and paradoxical effects which emerged as the key finding at the final level of analysis.

Chapter Seven

7. Mythological Constructions: Establishing 'The Truth'

The findings from the fourth level of analysis, myth/metaphor, are presented in this chapter. I begin with a detailed discussion of the way that participants' constructions were shaped by the myth of dichotomy; outlining the sense of dilemma or conflict that emerged throughout their interviews. I then critically examine this logic of dichotomy and discuss the ways in which the inevitable limitations this way of knowing establishes impacted on how the participants could, and could not, construct their conduct and subjectivities. Specifically, I explore the paradoxical effects this less conscious, more emotive way of knowing had on how the participants constructed what they do and who they are; detailing how such logic left participants having to continuously repudiate charges of deviance and disorder and continuously re-establish their normative positioning. I conclude the chapter by introducing Smith and Berg's (1996) theory of paradox and stuckness, discussing how this framework offers a deeper understanding of the problematic ways in which the myth of dichotomy appeared to shape the interview data.

7.1 Less conscious ways of knowing: A troubling myth emerges

In CLA the final level of analysis is concerned with the less conscious or less visible ways of knowing about a problem (Inayatullah, 1998, 2004). These are the ways of knowing that are so deeply embedded in culture, so taken for granted, that they are largely invisible to us (see Gridley, 2005) and instead tend to emerge in the emotive, visual, metaphorical aspects of what we have to say. Inayatullah (1998, 2004) thus refers to these ways of knowing as 'myths', as they influence how the world is constructed and approached in powerful, emotive, but often unnoticed, ways. Importantly, these ways of knowing often remain unseen and thus unexplored in many deconstructive analytic approaches. The inclusion of this final lens of analysis is thus considered to be one of the key strengths of CLA (Bishop et al., 2013; Dzidic, 2009). As Hare-Mustin and Marecek (1988) describe, such deconstruction of the "gaps, inconsistencies, and contradictions in the text, and even of metaphorical associations" can "reveal meanings present in the text but outside our everyday level of awareness" (p. 460). Thus the analysis of metaphors, emotive expressions, and gaps in what is said is understood to generate a fuller understanding of the complex and multiple ways in which a problem or phenomenon is constructed, as this can make visible the deeper, less conscious, knowledge processes (i.e., the myths) that often shape the world in powerful ways. The aim of this final level of analysis therefore was to deconstruct these gaps, metaphors and emotive dimensions in the data in order to make

visible the participants' take on the less conscious ways in which the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are constructed.

Importantly, by *less conscious* or *unconscious* Inayatullah (1998; 2004) means those knowledge practices which to varying degrees operate outside of awareness—knowledges and knowledge practices that are so entrenched and embedded in a culture's history and politics that they and their effects are typically unseen, unthinking and hence unchallenged. These ways of knowing are thus understood to operate at a 'gut' level; where meaning-making generally does not occur in a 'thought-through' manner, but rather occurs more automatically and unthinkingly. Critically, the myth/metaphor level of analysis is thus concerned with not only what is *unseen* in relation to a given problem but also what is unknowingly *felt*. This suggests therefore that the unconscious knowledge practices which can emerge at this level of analysis may include affective as well as historical, political, and cultural forces. Importantly, then, the final level of CLA locates certain psychoanalytic ideas within a poststructuralist stance. As Burr (2004) points out, although it seems questionable to combine these two accounts given the essentialist epistemology undergirding psychoanalytic thinking, certain scholars (e.g., Lacan, 1977) have shown how the non-essentialist appropriation of aspects of psychoanalytic accounts can cogently address certain inadequacies in poststructuralist accounts – namely, the absence of affect, desires and agency. In encouraging the researcher to attend to not only those knowledge practices that have become unseen and unchallenged through their historical and cultural embeddedness, but also to the unspoken or less visible emotive dimensions of the problem, the myth/metaphor level of analysis thus provides a valuable opportunity to engage in a more comprehensive deconstructive enterprise—one which does not exclude the potential influence of affective processes.

Importantly then, this final level of analysis aimed to make visible those ways of knowing and their effects which were not immediately apparent in what the participants voiced. Interestingly, even early on in the collection and analysis of the interview data it was apparent that the *feel* of what the participants had to say was characterised by a sense of conflict. Consistent with Inayatullah's (1998, 2004) conceptualisation of less conscious ways of knowing being made visible through the analysis of affective dimensions and gaps in the data, examining this theme of conflict emerging in the interviews made visible the extent to which the participants' constructions of their conduct and subjectivities were shaped by the powerful cultural myth of dichotomy. Moreover, examination of this largely unspoken sense of conflict made visible extent to which the effects of this less conscious

way of knowing placed significant limitations on what the participants could and could not say.

The analysis showed that at a 'gut' level the participants saw dichotomising ways of knowing as the blueprint for constructing their conduct and subjectivities. In particular, the analysis made apparent the extent to which what they had to say was shaped by the implicit expectation that they must pin down 'the truth' about what they do and thus establish their 'true self' by establishing which of the opposing positions (e.g., autonomous or compulsive, responsible or irresponsible, deserving or undeserving, a neoliberal citizen or a deviant/disordered other) they credibly occupy. In analysing their application of these dichotomising ways of knowing when constructing their conduct and subjectivities, what became visible was the paradoxical nature of such efforts. Indeed, a key theme conveyed throughout the interviews was the extent to which such ways of knowing instated expectations about how to understand and approach such conduct and subjects that cannot be realised. These ways of knowing were thus shown to instil into the process of constructing their conduct and selves an underlying sense of dilemma for participants, because they instructed participants to expect that their conduct and subjectivities can and should be 'pinned down' according to one, coherent, unified 'truth' despite the fact that the multiple, contradictory realities in which their conduct and subjects occur makes such fixed, cohesive positioning an impossibility.

Critically, analysis of this dilemma made visible the limitations such ways of knowing imposed upon how the participants could and could not construct what they do and who they are. Indeed, it showed that it was these very same dichotomising practices that shaped the participants' response to this dilemma, and how this approach created a self-perpetuating loop in which participants came to repeat task of dichotomisation over and over again because, paradoxically, such efforts to resolve the above dilemma left them re-encountering this conflict time and time again. Making visible this underlying conflict and the participants' approach to it thus made it possible to see how these ways of knowing prevented participants from accessing more effective and appropriate ways of knowing and thus subverted the formation of more adequate, less stigmatising and less marginalising ways of constructing their conduct and subjectivities. Critically therefore, in highlighting how these ways of knowing operated as an invisible, emotional, and hence deeply powerful barrier to change for the participants, the findings at this level of analysis point to the importance of better understanding how such mythological practices may

contribute to the pronounced, pervasive *and enduring* stigmatisation and marginalisation of people who use illicit drugs, an issue which is discussed at length in chapter eight.

7.2 Conflict: “It doesn’t add up”

The practice of determining the credibility of knowledge and subjects according to the parameters of coherence, unity, and order is deeply ingrained in western liberal culture. As Peng and Nisbett (1999) describe, over time these parameters have come to constitute the “laws of formal logic” that western liberal culture uses to determine which assertions and subjects we can see as ‘truthful’, ‘stable’ and ‘reliable’ and which we should see as specious and unreliable (p. 743; see also Suh, 2002). According to such laws, unless these parameters of coherence, unity, and order are met, the credibility of an assertion or subject is necessarily questionable. Importantly, “guided by tacit ontologies and epistemologies or folk wisdom about the world and knowledge” (Peng & Nisbett, 1999, p. 742), these laws operate as unconscious cultural traditions, or myths; meaning that we tend to enact such logic without thinking. Thus because this logic has come to exist as way of seeing the world that is taken for granted as ‘the’ way to see the world, the notion that contradiction cannot be tolerated when determining the credibility of an assertion has come to exist as a rule that we tend not to question or even realise we are applying most of the time, because it has been deeply embedded into our cultural practice and our collective unconscious in the form of such laws/traditions/myths. Indeed, when two contradictory propositions are encountered, members of western liberal culture tend to unthinkingly accept that this means that one must be true and the other false, despite the fact that such logic is something that we tend not to be expressly aware of as we go about our day-to-day reasoning.

The analysis of the less conscious, more emotive dimensions of what the participants had to say made visible the extent to which the participants’ objections to more automatic and authoritative ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects and adoption of contemporary discursive ways of knowing were underpinned by this tacit expectation that the grounds for such claims must be consistent, coherent, and total for them to be seen as credible. Indeed, when looking at the sense of conflict that ran throughout the data, what emerged was the interaction between the participants’ perceived need to determine where their conduct and selves ‘fit’ within the mess of divergent and disjunctive ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects (due to the myths/laws of logic introduced above) and their awareness of fact that none of

these ways of knowing produce entirely satisfactory or credible understandings what they do and who they are.

An explicit example of this was the way that Ron problematised the tendency for drug-using subjects to be deemed suitable or unsuitable to receive pain relief medication whilst simultaneously endorsing such dichotomisations as an appropriate structure through which to know of and approach such subjects:

You just get so frustrated and aggravated, you know, 'cause of the way they've got everything put into place. Like, how it all fits like a jigsaw puzzle but it doesn't, because there's junkies out there and there's people that are in actual pain, you know what I mean?

On one hand, Ron clearly saw dichotomising ways of knowing, through which people who use illicit drugs are constructed (i.e., defined/diagnosed) and responded to (i.e., treated) as occupying a fixed position within predetermined structures of knowledge and subjectivity, as problematic. Pointing to the direct effects of these constructions, he conveyed how the widely accepted and adhered to parameters of dichotomy insist that his conduct and his subjectivity can and should be constructed in fixed, singular, discrete terms. As he put it, this way of knowing constructs him as occupying a specific "place" within the mess of divergent and disjunctive accounts (i.e., within this "jigsaw puzzle") in which his conduct and his subjectivity most accurately and relevantly "fits". In doing so, he clearly expressed concern about the inadequacy of this dichotomising approach; pointing out that it fails to take into account the multiple and competing realities of his drug use, which he constructs elsewhere in his interview as *both* a legitimate and illegitimate (i.e., as an 'illegitimate' practice for managing his 'legitimate' pain - see Bell & Salmon, 2008 for detailed discussion of this). Ron seemed to imply, then, that his conduct and his subjectivity would be better constructed in more amorphous and overlapping terms rather than as a fixed, discrete piece that can only occupy a single "place" within the "jigsaw puzzle" of differing accounts. Yet at the same time, in asserting that there are those subjects who can and should be positioned as suitable to receive pain relief and those who can and should be deemed unsuitable, Ron adopted this logic of dichotomy. His comments therefore highlighted the tension that arises from the competing needs that this way of knowing generates. On the one hand this mythology of dichotomy is something that tacitly, almost instinctively shapes how he constructs the acts and subjects of illicit drug use, but on the other hand the constructions this mythology produces are something he sees as deeply inadequate given the complex, multiple ways in which such conduct and subjectivities occur.

Various researchers have problematised this dichotomous way of knowing and the overly restrictive and unrealistic constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects they produce (Bell & Salmon, 2008; Fraser & Moore, 2008; Fraser & Treloar, 2006; Karasaki et al., 2013; Keane, 2000; Lancaster, Seear & Treloar, 2015; Radcliffe & Stevens, 2008; Rødner, 2005; Sedgwick, 1994; Seear & Fraser, 2010a; valentine & Fraser, 2009). Showing how subjectivities take place in the context of multiple, competing realities that are often in flux and thus unfold in complex, composite, and somewhat nebulous terms, such critique has emphasised that the fixed and one-dimensional subjectivities which are generated via the logic of dichotomy promulgate understandings that map poorly onto the realities of subjectivity. This has been explored in relation to a variety of subjectivity domains—e.g., gender (Butler, 1993), organisational roles (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002), mothering (Croghan & Miell, 1998), sexuality (Adkins, 2001a, 2001b), HIV status (Riggs, 2006), ethnicity (Ang, 2003)—not just those associated with illicit drug use. But it is an issue to which critique of drug-related subjectivity often returns.

Seear and Fraser (2010a), for example, draw on constructions of a prominent Western Australian footballer, Ben Cousins (whose problems with illicit drug use have frequently been publicised – see also Seear & Fraser, 2010b), to examine the effects of constructing drug-using subjects and their conduct according to such dichotomising practices:

For Cousins, the 'truth' of himself is that he is both compulsive and voluntaristic, with each reliant upon the other for its existence. Compulsion is not the antithesis of sporting success but a fundamental ingredient in it. Without compulsion, Cousins would lose all of the 'great memories' he has of 'playing football and doing all the great things in my life'. His desire to liberate himself from the 'double life' thus points to the value of resisting the absolute polarisation of voluntariness and compulsivity and in integrating these claimed 'opposites'. The problem for Cousins is that his desire to be liberated from the 'lie' of voluntariness and compulsivity as polar opposites—his aspiration to tell the 'truth' about himself—is not possible for so long as the normative fantasy of compulsivity and voluntariness as mutually exclusive persists. Implicit in these observations is an important imperative: we must find new ways of understanding 'addiction' which do not invoke one-dimensional understandings of the 'addict' (p. 449).

They thus highlight how the dichotomising parameters relied upon when forming subjects or identities in western liberal culture make the construction of drug-using subjects in

multi- rather than uni- dimensional terms unthinkable. That is, they point out how these ways of knowing insist that multiple, overlapping truths and subjectivities cannot co-exist but must be separated into individual, mutually exclusive, opposing subjectivities. Importantly therefore, Seear and Fraser's (2010a) analysis shows how these ways of knowing restrict constructions of subjects and the world to a one-dimensional, polarising plane in which the process of identification or subjectivity is limited to either/or terms (i.e., one must be identified or positioned as either compulsive or autonomous). They thus show how such knowledge practices prevent the development of understandings of illicit drug use that map out the multiple realities of such conduct and subjectivities and how they co-exist and interact. Critically however, Seear and Fraser (2010a) acknowledge that despite these limitations this myth of dichotomous reasoning continues to dominate how subjectivity is formed in western liberal culture. This was certainly the case in the conversations I had with participants. Indeed, the interview data was clearly bound by this restrictive, inflexible framework, and the participants likewise clearly struggle to reconcile the understandings and subjectivities such logic produces with the complex, competing, multidimensional realities of their drug use and lives.

Lucy alluded to this tension between this dichotomising way of knowing and the multiple, competing, overlapping realities of illicit drug use, and how it limits constructions of such conduct and subjects:

Um, so I do wonder then if there are people who fall into the same category as me, um, and make things problematic when perhaps they're not. Yeah, it feels all boxy at the moment; like it's either a problem or it doesn't exist, instead of acknowledging the whole bunch of people who probably are in the middle.

She thus expressed concern about the possibility that other people who use illicit drugs adopt an approach to making sense of their conduct that is similar to her own, and thus tend to likewise "make things problematic" even though such positioning may be unwarranted. Indeed, Lucy was clearly concerned about the extent to which "it feels" as though the only way drug use can be understood is through the "boxy" terms of dichotomy. The use of this metaphor thus made it apparent that at a 'gut' level what Lucy 'knows' about her drug use is limited to one-dimensional parameters; highlighting how unthinkingly such logic precludes her from constructing her conduct and herself in more sophisticated, nuanced terms. Indeed, consistent with Seear and Fraser's (2010a) critique, Lucy's account highlighted how this logic restricts the construction of her conduct and subjectivity to either/or terms; meaning that she must be identified as either a drug user or a non-drug

user, problematic or non-problematic, autonomous or compulsive, normal or abnormal, good or bad, etc. Importantly, like Ron, Lucy's use of this metaphor emphasised how the realities of illicit drug use mean that the drug-using practices and subjectivities of many individuals are unlikely to be accountable for in these restrictive, polarised, "boxy" terms, because what they do tends instead to fall somewhere "in the middle" between drug use that is "a problem" and drug use that "doesn't exist". Moreover, in using this metaphor Lucy also conveyed the stigmatising and marginalising effects these "boxy" ways of knowing can have. Indeed, she described how they prompt her to see her use of illicit drugs as more "problematic" than it is because she cannot credibly (i.e., fully, consistently) occupy a position of abstinence and thus feels that the position of 'problematic drug user' constitutes the only 'logical' position. Lucy thus clearly described how an inability (at a cultural and individual level) to see what lies "in the middle"—the inability to acknowledge composite, potentially contradictory, propositions and subject positions—produces stigmatising and marginalising constructions of conduct, subjects, and the world.

Yet this metaphor of "boxy" ways of knowing frequently emerged throughout the data. Indeed, such dichotomising ways of knowing were clearly something participants applied when constructing their conduct and subjectivities. Specifically, it became apparent that these ways of knowing instructed participants to see positions of deviance and disorder as truths they cannot 'logically' reject because their conduct and subjectivities do not fit within the particular 'box' that such positioning requires. Consequently, one of the key ways that the conflict produced via dichotomous logic seemed to impact on the participants' constructions of their conduct and subjectivities was that rather than maintaining their rejection of stigmatising and marginalising positions they at times *took up* such positions. Indeed, this logic seemed to prompt participants to see the inability for their conduct and subjectivities to fully, uninterruptedly align with the norms and values of neoliberal citizenship as undermining the credibility of their rejection of deviance and disorder.

This was noticeable in the way that Abby spoke about her experience of stigma:

I've always felt the stigma of it. Like, even when I've used it and enjoyed it, like, it's been a stigma to me. Like, even though I don't judge anyone else, it's not how I like to see myself. Hence I'll go, I won't let anyone see me smoking, like, even when I was using amphetamines I would never use it in front of one person, even my husband. I'd go away separate because I don't like to think of myself as doing that (...) it was always kind of um, [it] didn't sit well for me. But that was normal in my environment. Um, not that I think it's bad, I don't think drug use is bad, but I didn't

like using drugs, even though I was doing it. But I realised I considered myself as a drug user, like, you know I definitely would see myself in that category which is part of what wasn't comfortable for me (...) that's not how I wanted to be perceived. So part of it was normalised, and still is in a way, but um, part of it's quite ashamed, so there's a bit of a conflict there I think.

In the same way that Lucy described seeing her use of cannabis as “problematic”, Abby spoke here about seeing her drug use and herself in ways that were deeply at odds with those constructions of her conduct and subjectivity as aligned with the norms and values of neoliberal citizenship that she formed through more discursive ways of knowing. Conveyed here was the fact that, in contrast to those more deliberate discursive constructions, at a less conscious level Abby saw her drug use and herself in ways that were shaped by the felt assumption that individuals must occupy fixed, cohesive positions. When taking part in the act of using of illicit drugs, therefore, she felt that the only credible position for her to occupy was that of a “drug user”. Moreover, this she spoke about this inability to reject her positioning within this “category” of “drug user”, or more pertinently the inability to see *multiple* positions as credible, as being central to the sense of “stigma” that she has “always felt” accompanies her use of illicit drugs.

Importantly, then, this suggests that Abby’s experience of stigma may not simply be the product of the automatic and structured ways of knowing which so routinely construct the subject position of drug user as other in numerous ways. It is possible that her experience of stigma may *also* arise from the way that dichotomising ways of knowing make her see such litanies as ‘the truth’ about who she is and what she does, because when she is engaged in the act of illicit drug use she is “definitely...in that category” of “drug user” and thus cannot *fully* reject such positioning, regardless of the extent to which other aspects of her conduct and herself may not fit within that category. Thus it appeared that no matter how much Abby saw herself and illicit drug use in general as “normalised” and not “bad”, the effects of the myth of dichotomy meant that when she approached those aspects of this conduct that are hard to reconcile with the category or ‘box’ of the ‘normal’ or ‘good’ subject she could not maintain a sense of herself as legitimately positioned as a successful neoliberal citizen.

Using a slightly different metaphor, Chris also spoke about the stigmatising implications of trying to account for the multiple, competing realities of daily injecting drug use in fixed, coherent terms:

It's a hard life to live being an addict, like trying to support a habit every day, and tryin' to keep people to have a good respect of you. I mean like, seriously, the amount of bad shit you've got to do just to get by, it doesn't add up.

Numerous researchers have expressed concern about how the dichotomising ways of knowing which underpin the neoliberal model of subjectivity fail to acknowledge the extent to which drug-using practices and individual autonomy, responsibility and health are always shaped, and often constrained, by a confluence of often competing social, political, economic, cultural, psychological, and material factors (Fitzgerald et al., 2004; Fraser, 2004; Halperin, 1995; Lupton, 1997; Moore & Fraser, 2006; Sedgewick, 1994; Stephenson, 2003; Valverde, 1997; valentine & Fraser, 2008; Weinberg, 2013). Describing these constraints as making it impossible for him to always act in ways that “add up” to the absolute, uninterrupted performance of autonomous, responsible, healthy subjectivity, it was clear that this is exactly how these ways of knowing impact on how Chris sees his conduct and subjectivity. He made apparent the tension that exists between the understandings and approaches dichotomising ways of knowing create and the realities of how such conduct and subjectivities occur. In particular, he spoke about the difficulty he faces because on the one hand (thanks to these taken-for-granted ways of knowing) he knows that normative, respectable positioning is contingent on his drug-using practices adding up in a consistent, unified manner but on the other hand knows that such consistency and coherence is unrealistic in the context of the realities of illicit drug use. His comment highlighted that the upshot of this tension is that he feels he will be unable to ‘credibly’ (according to the logic of dichotomy) attain a position that affords “good respect” as long as he continues to use illicit drugs. Consistent with the above examples, therefore, Chris’ comment showed how—regardless of the various discursive ways in which he and his conduct can be constructed as aligned with the norms and values of neoliberal subjectivity—the nexus between the complexities of his daily injecting drug use and the mythology of the ‘true self’ restricts him from being able to reject a position of deviance and disorder, because his conduct can never *fully* ‘fit’ with or “add up” to the criteria that such ways of knowing instate as necessary to establish the grounds for doing so.

These stigmatising effects of such dichotomising ways of knowing were also apparent in the following conversations with Cameron. On several occasions throughout his interview Cameron emphatically objected to the way that people who use illicit drugs are automatically and constructed as dishonest and untrustworthy in authoritative ways. He also drew on the discourse of authenticity to contest constructions of the intoxicated

subject as deeply inauthentic; showing how such discursive ways of knowing make it possible for him to be seen as living up to the ethic of authenticity even when intoxicated. This was evident in the way that he spoke about often feeling concerned that people would assume that his laughter and amusement in social situations were not authentic but rather a by-product of his intoxication:

...because, I mean, I'm quite a giggly person and I don't want them to be like 'he's laughing like this because, you know, because he's high', I want them to be like 'he's laughing at this because he thinks it's funny'.

However Cameron's sense of his eligibility to be positioned as living up to these ethics of honesty and authenticity was not without disruption:

I mean it's certainly the worst part of taking drugs that, you know, feeling you have to hide it, you know, from whatever. It's like, um I don't know, when you know that someone who, uh, who knows about your behaviour and is fine with it and, you know, still like loves and supports you kind of thing, you feel like... You know, for example, like, my mum doesn't know exactly, she doesn't know how much that I smoke – she probably knows that I do smoke but I don't really know, I smoked for a long time at home and I had one run-in with the police when I was a juvenile so she knows that I've smoked before. But I mean, you know, my mum, who I should be able to tell anything in the world, and who I should be able to be myself in front of, you know, she doesn't know exactly know. You know, that's something I have to keep to myself.

His comments thus again made visible the sense of conflict that arose throughout the interviews. On the one hand, participants clearly felt that in order to be credibly positioned as successful neoliberal citizens their conduct must fully, uninterruptedly align with such norms and ethics, but on the other hand they also saw the unavoidable ways in which the complex realities of illicit drug use make such absolute consistency unattainable. Specifically, Cameron spoke about the way that a cultural context in which well-established litanies of deviance and disorder make it necessary to anticipate that disclosure of one's drug use will result in censure, disappointment, and even "disgust" (Harris & Fiske, 2009) limits his choices when it comes to such disclosure to the options of either being identified as deviant and disordered for using cannabis or being seen deviant or disordered for not being open about his drug use (see Vigilant, 2004). He thus expressed significant concern about the fact that although he predominantly feels he can credibly reject constructions of deviance and disorder and instead be constructed as an honest and authentic subject, there are times when these normalising and empowering constructions are disrupted by implications of otherness. Indeed, he described such disruptions as "the worst part of taking drugs" – as something he experiences as deeply uncomfortable. It seems likely

therefore that the level of discomfort this tension elicits for Cameron is because the logic of dichotomy tells him that with such disruptions in his performance of authenticity his conduct and subjectivity are not fully, uninterruptedly aligned with the norms and values of neoliberal citizenship and therefore that he cannot credibly reject the position of the dishonest and untrustworthy drug-using subject. Made visible in such comments, therefore, was the way that this myth of dichotomy, in interaction with the complex social and structural realities of illicit drug use which make absolute and uninterrupted responsibility, autonomy, authenticity, etc. an impossibility, resulted in participants seeing their actions and themselves in stigmatising and marginalising terms.

7.2.1 Working out 'the truth': Swinging back and forth

The impacts of this less conscious way of knowing on how the participants constructed what they do and who they are were not only made visible through the tension between dichotomising ways of knowing and the realities of their drug-use, but also through the way that the participants responded to such contradictions or inconsistencies as they emerged. Indeed, the impacts of the logic of dichotomy on what the participants had to say were made apparent in the way that each time such conflict was encountered the participants responded by engaging in the task of working out 'the truth' about their conduct and subjectivities – by engaging in the project of establishing 'the truth' about where the conduct and subjectivities 'fit' within this mess of divergent and disjunctive accounts. Once again, the analysis of these responses made apparent the stigmatising and marginalising effects of the myth of dichotomy. Moreover, this finding made apparent the potency of this myth of dichotomy.

The tendency to adopt a dichotomising response to tension between different constructions of their conduct and subjectivities was particularly apparent in the following, in which Lucy explicitly spoke about this task of trying to establish 'the truth' (i.e., of establishing which of differing constructions of her conduct and subjectivity she can "trust"):

Actually articulating some of this stuff has actually (pause), how do I say it? Has actually made it much clearer to me that, for me, the crux of what goes on is the dissonance between my experience of my drug use, the meaning I make of it, and the broader social stories/narratives around that stuff. Which I think is actually really helpful. Like, it actually makes me, gives me space to choose to trust my experience. Because before it was sort of like a tangled web; I hadn't quite gone 'ok so there's me and my experience, and then [there's] what other people are telling me I should be making of my experience', having gotten that clearer.

What Lucy had to say here was clearly shaped by the myth of dichotomy. This was made explicit in the way that she spoke about feeling unsure about which of the “tangled web” of conflicting ways of understanding her drug use she can “trust” and thus in the way that she was shown to see such conflict or “dissonance” as something that she seeks to work out or resolve. Importantly, although in this particular moment Lucy arrived at the conclusion that she could “trust” what she makes of her experience over what “broader social stories/narratives” of deviance and disorder tell her to make of it, she implied that such trust in this particular, normalising ‘truth’ is difficult to maintain as there are times when she instead finds herself considering the possibility that accounts of deviance and disorder are the more trustworthy or true. What Lucy said therefore seemed to convey that this myth of dichotomy has the effect of prompting her to ‘to and fro’ between these different ways of making sense of her experience; at times seeing normalising and empowering accounts as what’s ‘true’ of her conduct and self, but at other times seeing those of deviance and disorder as ‘the truth’.

According to Cameron, this is precisely what he finds himself doing in response to conflicting ways of accounting for his conduct and subjectivity:

I often have this conversation with my housemate and I say, we talk about it and I might say ‘god you know we’re just these stupid stoners’ sort of thing and he gets all irritated and is like, you know, ‘don’t put me in that box’ kind of thing. But um like... I don’t know, I mean it’s very, like for me it’s like I’ll sort of swing back and forth between, like, ‘I shouldn’t do this its ruining my life blah blah blah, I waste all this time, I waste all this money’ and that sort of thing. But I also swing back to the, I don’t know, I mean I’m much, much sort of happier and less, less like irritated and less moody and, um, just sort of more pleasant to people when I have it in my life. And maybe, I guess that’s probably how I’m dependent on it sort of thing.

In keeping with previous findings, Cameron clearly articulated the tension that he encounters because on the one hand he expects that his conduct can and should occupy one single position or “box” but on the other hand he sees that the multiple, competing realities of his drug use and his subjectivity cannot be reconciled under a single, fixed, and discrete subjectivity. More than this however, he clearly articulated that he responds to this tension by *alternating* between seeing one or the other of these positions as ‘the truth’ – stating that he’ll “swing back and forth” between stigmatising and marginalising positions of deviance and disorder and normalising and legitimating positions of neoliberal citizenship. Critically therefore, this interaction explicitly showed the stigmatising and marginalising effects of constructing his conduct and subjectivity according to this less conscious way of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects. It highlighted how

the application of this logic prevented Cameron from feeling fully entitled to his normative positioning and instead often taking up positions of deviance and disorder.

This effect was particularly apparent in the following conversation with Josh:

Josh: I don't know; I don't like drug dealers. I don't like anything to do with that sort of thing. I guess I'm pretty ignorant you know, I uh, I'm pretty insolent. I'm happy to take them and I'm happy to, if somebody wants to try it, um not encourage them, but you know, give them any information that I can that sort of thing. But then again, I don't like the people that manufacture them and the problems associated with them. So I don't know where I sit in this, sort of (...) yeah, so I'm not sure where to put my standing on that um...

Laura: what don't you like about the... the people who do make them?

Josh: I think it's because of the people that really abuse them and, you know, people's lives are ruined by, by drugs on one end of the scale and on the other end there's, you know, occasional users, you know, like myself. And the people are happy to manufacture them probably well knowing that it's destroying so many people. And they seem to have no remorse or regrets about it and they just keep pumping things out um, that sort of bothers me, knowing that people are sort of dealing in death sometimes. But then, you know, they are illegal at the end of the day, and you know, me buying one, you know, it's still putting money into their pockets and supporting them and sort of reinvesting in their business to make more. So I think anyone that buys them is supporting them, I shouldn't really say that I don't like them you know, but... I guess I'm just, yeah sort of two different worlds: our use and other people's use. And I just keep to our little world. Someone goes and gets them for me; I don't know where they get them from. We just buy a couple so that's like nothing bad you know? That's all I like to see. (...) it's almost kind of selfish you know? Thinking that just, you know, they are there for our enjoyment and just put that out of my mind you know? I don't, I care for people, like, that sort of thing, you know? It upsets me when I hear stories like that [death at 'Big Day Out']. But then, you know, I'm just a hypocrite saying they shouldn't be doing that [manufacturing/dealing drugs] when I'm still supporting them, even if it's just the minor, you're either in or you're out I think.

It was clear throughout this discussion that Josh felt that his conduct and his subjectivity must 'fit' in a logical, coherent manner with one particular way of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects. This was evident in the spatial metaphors he used – describing his uncertainty about where to “put” his “standing” or where he “sit[s]” in relation to differing, polarised accounts of illicit drug use (e.g., those which construct the trade and use of illicit drugs as despicable and antisocial and those which construct the “little world” and economy of “occasional users” as “nothing bad”). Josh’s approach to constructing what he does and who he is throughout this interaction were thus clearly shaped by the unspoken logic of dichotomy, which prompted him to feel that he can and must uncover where he ‘truly’ “sits” in relation to the opposing understandings of illicit drug use, and hence

discover which “world” he ‘truly’ belongs to. What stood out was that, as was the case for Cameron, the application of such logic had the effect of prompting Josh to take up a position of deviance. Although Josh acknowledged that his highly-constrained drug-using practices contrast significantly with the deviant world of illicit drug use manufacturing and distribution, he also acknowledged that this contrast could not be seen as full or total, as even his “little world” of drug use involves participating in “illegal” activities, including very “minor” involvement in the economy of the illicit drug trade. Thus it seemed that the emergence of such conflict prompted Josh to swing from seeing himself in normative terms to seeing himself as deviant. That is, it prompted him to deduce that because he participates in the world of the illicit drug economy, no matter how minimally, he cannot ‘logically’ position himself as sitting outside of this world – because if “you’re either in or you’re out”, he can only conclude that he must be “in”. In generating this impulsion to work out where he ‘sits’ within the mess of divergent and disjunctive accounts, the less conscious, more emotive logic of dichotomy thus clearly had a stigmatising and marginalising effect on how Josh made sense of what he does and who he is. Indeed, it clearly shaped him to see his normative positioning as less defensible and positions of deviance and disorder as plausible, and thus left him swinging back and forth between these two versions of his conduct and subjectivity.

A less explicit example of this emerged in the way Sam described being affected by stereotypes:

I think a lot of good people feel bad about themselves because of the stereotypes. Like, I know I do. I think, sometimes I think ‘oh god, if that person knew...’ I feel bad if they like me because I think ‘well, if they knew the truth maybe they wouldn’t’.

In commenting that she generally sees herself as a “good person”, but sometimes also thinks that perhaps she is not eligible to be seen as a good or likeable person because “the truth” about her is that she is a person who uses illicit drugs, it was clear that the way Sam sees and positions her conduct and subjectivity is shaped by an underlying concern with establishing ‘the truth’ about her conduct and her subjectivity. Although she did not explicitly speak about how she responds to conflicting ways of seeing her conduct and herself, it seemed apparent in what she said that she too alternates between ostensibly opposing ways of seeing her conduct and subjectivity. While throughout much of her interview she was shown to typically see herself as living up to the norms and values of neoliberal citizenship in a host of ways, in moments such as this one she was shown to at times also entertain the possibility that this good and likeable version of herself is not “the

truth” but that rather, because if she is someone who smokes cannabis daily, her ‘true self’ is someone who others would not like nor see as a “good” person. Importantly, Sam spoke about these instances in which she positions herself as other as an outcome of the litany of stereotypes which position people who use illicit drugs in these stigmatising and marginalising ways. Critically however, the findings at this final level of analysis suggest that in addition to the effects of these automatic ways of knowing Sam may also position herself at times in such stigmatising and marginalising ways because of the effects of the logic of dichotomy. Specifically, it seemed that such logic shapes her to expect that in order to be credibly seen and treated as a likeable and good person she must fully and uninterruptedly adhere to socially valued and acceptable forms of conduct – an expectation that, for a variety of reasons (see chapter five), is difficult to meet when one uses an illicit substance.

Hamish too was shown to respond to conflicting accounts of his drug use and his subjectivity, such as when his ex-partner called him an “addict”, with such logic:

...there became guilt associated with it every time that I used, because of that label. So, you know, being called an addict, it was an offhand comment it wasn't like 'you are' but it was, you know, 'you're an addict, fucking sort your shit out', whatever. So then when I would go to smoke, I would go 'well do I want this or am I an addict?' because I'd been told by, I'd just recently been told that. So I'd choose to smoke it knowing full well that there was connotations and I'd only feel guilty because she would know that I was stoned and therefore would think that I was [addicted], [it was] like, you know, I was giving her evidence of her opinion. But at the same time I was making that choice. Like, I wasn't just suddenly finding myself stoned and she came home and I've gone 'oh no, I'm stoned', I was going 'I want this'.

According to Hamish, despite being made in an “offhand” manner, his ex-partner’s comment impacted significantly on how he saw his drug use and himself, as it made him question whether his drug use was consistent with the stigmatising and marginalising constructions of addiction or if it was consistent with the normalising and legitimating constructions of “choice” and autonomy. This again made apparent the participants’ tendency to respond to such conflict with the task of working out which of these ostensibly opposing constructions was ‘true’, and accordingly establishing which was ‘untrue’. Moreover, it again highlighted that this process was not a linear one but rather involved swinging back and forth between opposing constructions. Indeed, it seemed that this less conscious, more emotive way of knowing had the effect of embroiling Hamish in the process of alternating between times when he could see his conduct and subjectivity in normalising terms and those times when he felt that positions of deviance and disorder were a more accurate place to locate what he does and who he is.

Thus a consistent theme that emerged through the analysis of the sense of conflict that ran throughout the interview data concerned the extent to which the myth of dichotomy left participants swinging back and forth between positions of neoliberal citizenship and positions of deviance and disorder; undermining their confidence in the contrasts they drew out in such detail elsewhere and resulting in moments of resignation to charges of otherness. It thus seemed that this less conscious way of knowing influenced how the participants made sense of their drug use and themselves in ways that *maintained* stigmatising and marginalising constructions and thus posed a barrier to the formation of understandings of what they do and who they are which were more adequate and which successfully addressed the stigma and marginalisation that more automatic and formalised constructions generate. Consequently, these findings signalled the importance of more closely examining how these ways of knowing operate.

7.3 Examining the Effects of Dichotomy

Dichotomous reasoning has been problematised by critical theorists across numerous disciplines for the way that it restricts how we understand the world and subjects (e.g., Crawford, 1994; Butler, 1993; 1997; Derrida, 1979; Shildrick 2000; Serres, 1995; Smith & Berg, 1997). As Serres (1995) puts it, such reasoning or “binary thinking” constitutes a “dualistic hell” because it limits our thinking and knowledge production to the principles of unity and order in ways that preclude “new thought” and “possibility” (cited in Fraser & Moore, 2008, p. 749). The above findings are consistent with this argument, showing how dichotomising ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects limited participants to an either/or approach when making sense of divergent and disjunctive constructions of their conduct and subjectivities. What the findings also highlighted is how such limitations in their thinking and the preclusion of alternative, less dualistic understandings resulted in participants seeing their drug use and themselves in terms that reflect and generate significant stigma and marginalisation. This is consistent with the work of many critical researchers in the field of AOD research, who have repeatedly pointed out that this deeply ingrained practice of dichotomous reasoning is central to the stigmatisation and marginalisation of such conduct and those engaged in it (Bell & Salmon, 2008; Fraser & Moore, 2008; Fraser & Treloar, 2006; Lancaster, Seear & Treloar, 2015; Radcliffe & Stevens, 2008; Sedgewick, 1994; Seear & Fraser, 2010a; valentine & Fraser, 2009); as this is the “very system” of thinking that “underpins the notion of the addict and his/her abjection” (Fraser & Moore, 2008, p. 749). However, such critical work has predominantly focused on problematising the way that dichotomous logic impacts on

the constructions of and responses to illicit drug use and drug-using subjects in broader contexts such as research, treatment, and policy. What made this research unique therefore was the opportunity to explore the how such logic operated and the effects it produced when constructing illicit drug use and drug-using subjects at an individual level.

In keeping with existing critical work, analysis of the effects of dichotomising ways of knowing on the participants constructions of their conduct and subjectivities highlighted the importance of questioning how such binary thinking may establish the conditions in/through which stigmatising and marginalising accounts of illicit drug use continue to remain so central to how we see and respond to such conduct and those engaged in it. In examining the ways in which this less conscious way of knowing affected the way the participants responded to divergent and disjunctive accounts, it became apparent that the myth of dichotomy precluded participants from forming new understandings that are more in keeping with the realities of their drug use and their subjectivities. More than this, however, this examination also made visible the paradoxical outcomes of this myth. Indeed, it made apparent the way that dichotomous logic left participants rehashing the applicability of those accounts that participants were keen to reject as pertaining to their conduct and selves (i.e., accounts of deviance and disorder).

So far, I have suggested that those moments when participants positioned themselves in terms of deviance and disorder could be explained as not just a consequence of the tension between the need to establish 'the truth' about what they do and who they are and the multiple, often contradictory realities of their conduct and subjectivities, as well as their dichotomising responses to this tension. However, as I explain throughout this section, deeper analysis of the effects of adopting an either/or approach to making sense of the mess of divergent and disjunctive constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects suggested that such moments can also potentially be explained as resulting from the *paradoxical effects* of such a dichotomising approach. As is discussed in chapter eight, this finding is considered to be the key outcome of this research, as it raises pertinent questions about the role that this myth of dichotomy and its unconscious *and emotive* operations plays in making the stigmatisation and marginalisation of the acts and subjects of illicit drug use in western liberal culture so pervasive, so pronounced, *and so enduring*.

7.3.1 The inevitable paradox of dichotomy

In-depth critique of binary thinking has established the limitations of such an approach to constructing the world; highlighting how the mutually-constitutive nature of

dichotomised concepts necessarily renders such thinking a self-referential, paradoxical process (Crawford, 1994; Butler, 1993, 1997; Derrida, 1979; Shildrick 2000; Serres, 1995; Smith & Berg, 1997). Such work has shown how the relationship between opposing assertions dictates that each assertion cannot be formed without making reference to the other. This means, for example, that we cannot know of or describe 'self' without simultaneously knowing of and implicating the category of 'other'. Hence, our knowledge and descriptions of self are necessarily bound to or "contaminated by" the delineations or terms of otherness (Shildrick, 2000, p. 225). Contrary to its objective of separating out opposing assertions, therefore, dichotomous logic has the paradoxical effect of binding such assertions to each other. Consequently, such critical work stresses that the more we attempt to create clear separations and distinctions, the more connected that which we're attempting to pull apart becomes. As Grimes (1998) puts it, the more we attempt to separate particular assertions or images, the more those "images of what we have denied" will "turn towards us" (cited in Shildrick, 2000, p. 216).

Much of such critique has emerged through the deconstruction of identity in western liberal culture. Drawing together post-structural and psychodynamic frameworks, numerous writers challenge the way that the logic of dichotomy has created the notion that the subject or self exists as a discrete, interiorised, singular, and coherent entity. Specifically, they point out that rather than occurring naturally, as we have come to assume through the process of such ways of knowing becoming ingrained traditions or myths, this notion of subjectivity or selfhood is derivative of a confluence of factors that are specific to a particular cultural and political history (Collinson, 2003; Butler, 1993; 1997; Harding, 2007; Knights & Wilmott, 1989; Roberts, 2005; see also Rose, 1996). Following the work of Lacan (1979), such writers emphasise that the very idea of an interior and fixed self "is impossible" since the "reality" of the interiorised self (i.e., what makes this concept knowable and real) "lies outside itself" (Harding, 2007, p. 1763; see also Beech, 2011; Butler, 1993; Roberts, 2005; Shildrick, 2000). Indeed, as Roberts (2005) puts it, the dualism that underlies how we construct or "imagine" self in western liberal culture means that "all identifications...offer us an alluring moment of recognition that is offered and perhaps grasped as the 'truth' of the self but then collapses into its opposite" (p. 627). Thus, if we consider Giddens' (1991) formulation of identity as "not to be found in behaviour, nor—important though it is—in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going" (p. 54), then the effect of a dichotomous approach is that the project of

identity or subjectivity will always be undermined, because these principles will ensure that this narrative of self is constantly interrupted by the narrative of the other.

For Roberts (2005), such theory thus explains why the “ego is anxiously and endlessly involved in looking for the ways in which ‘I’ am similar or different, better or worse, more or less, loved or hated, included or rejected by others” (p. 637). Indeed, Butler (1993) emphasises that the inevitable upshot of this project of attempting to externalise or differentiate the other from the self is the continual reoccurrence of identifications of otherness, accompanied by the continual need to reject such otherness:

Certain forms of disavowal do reappear as external and externalised figures of abjection who receive the repudiation of the subject time and time again...This is not a buried identification that is left behind in a forgotten past, but an identification that must be levelled and buried again and again, *the compulsive repudiation by which the subject incessantly sustains his/her boundary* (p. 114, emphasis original).

Thus it seems that the practice of dichotomous reasoning does not lead to clear and permanent separations between one truth or another, one account or another, one subject or another, but instead paradoxically ties such truths, accounts, and subjects to each other. The implication therefore is that each time we attempt to establish a version of the truth or a subject position in dualistic terms we paradoxically ensure that the truth or subjectivity we hope to establish as untrue cannot be dismantled but rather will remain active and thus will inevitably re-emerge. Citing Žižek (2000, p. 252), Roberts (2005) thus describes such attempts to engage in dichotomising forms of resistance as “a ‘deadly mutual embrace’ that binds me ever more tightly to that which I resist” (p. 638).

As discussed below, therefore, such critique suggests that the findings at this final level of analysis could be explained as evidencing the paradoxical effects of a dichotomous approach to conduct the world, one’s conduct and one’s self. Specifically, it suggests that the participants’ consistent efforts to reject accounts of deviance and disorder as entirely inapplicable to their conduct and subjectivities may have had the effect of paradoxically reinforcing the connection between these litanies and formalised constructions and their understandings of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects. That is, rather than establishing accounts of deviance and disorder as clearly separate from their conduct and subjectivities, the dichotomising nature of the participants efforts to resist stigma and marginalisation may have paradoxically ensured that they continued to see these accounts as connected to

what they do and who they are. It seemed therefore that this mythology placed a powerful limitation on the participants' capacity to construct their conduct and subjectivities in ways that adequately correspond with the multiplicities and complexities of illicit drug use, and in ways that effectively contest such stigma and marginalisation. Indeed, it seemed that, far from fostering more adequate and less stigmatising constructions, this mythology had the effect of tying participants (at a 'gut' level) to the ineffective, paradoxical project of repudiating such stigmatising and marginalising charges.

7.3.2 Rehash, repudiate, repeat...

Consistent with the above critique of dichotomy, the participants' adoption of dichotomous logic when constructing their conduct and subjectivities seemed to have the paradoxical effect of reactivating those positions of deviance and disorder that they attempted to reject and thus of locking them into a repetitive cycle of repudiation. This was evident in what Hamish had to say about how he sees his drug use as relating to his sense of self:

My first word is integral (laughing). My second thing, second thought, was 'I probably shouldn't say that' (laughing). But I did anyway.

Laura: (laughing). But what's that about? No seriously, why do you think that your second thought was 'I shouldn't say that'?

Oh I guess just that notion that people having [drugs] tied up in their sense of self is a fault, there's a bit of a discourse around that I think. Um (pause) and I also see in some ways, you know even talking about my parents and how it was all ok with all the pot stuff but you know I still have a lot of issues with them doing that at that time... like while there was also a whole bunch of great stuff, a whole bunch of bad stuff happened because they did that too. And it's an integral part of their lives and their identity so I kind of see that as a fault in them I guess, a little bit, from a kid's perspective, looking at a parent with that role. So I guess I feel tugs from society and from a bit of past saying that you know, maybe you shouldn't be so happy to identify it as an integral part of yourself, you need to keep it as a part of you [that] you question. Um, yeah but, no I'd say it's something that I really enjoy doing. I connect with lots of different people through it, you know because of it, um, yeah it enhances my everyday experiences.

Hamish thus described how those constructions of deviance and disorder that he generally disavows as inapplicable to his own conduct and subjectivity at times encroach on how he sees what he does and who he is in moments when he "feels tugs" from his "past" (i.e., his experience of growing up in an environment where drug use was associated with certain harms) and "society" (i.e., automatic and authoritative constructions). His comments thus made apparent the ineffectiveness of attempts to fully disavow such implications of otherness. This move clearly did not fully establish this separation for Hamish, as the way

he described revisiting these implications at times indicated that their connection is something that remains active. Critically, it was clear that when Hamish revisits such charges of otherness his response is to once again repudiate them, by again aligning his conduct with the position of successful neoliberal citizen (e.g., where drug use is a way to perform the ethic of maximising one's life and self) and disavowing positions of deviance and disorder (e.g., where regular drug use signifies "a fault" within the individual). Yet, Hamish had already drawn out such distinctions several times before this conversation; having already established in numerous ways that the centrality of his drug use to his life is consistent with the neoliberal ethic of the enterprise of self (see chapter six). This conversation thus made visible the paradoxical effects of such repudiations (i.e., their failure to create the full, discrete and definite distinctions or separations and thus the failure to establish a normative position as 'the truth' once and for all) and highlighted how this paradox makes the task of repudiation something that must be repeated "again and again" (Butler, 1993, p. 114).

Importantly therefore, interactions such as this throughout the interviews suggested that although imputations of deviance and disorder encountered by participants clearly originated from numerous noticeable sources (e.g., past or current experiences, cultural litanies, socio-structural conditions, etc.) they also originated from the less visible source of unworkability of dichotomising practices. That is, such interactions suggested that one of the reasons participants continued to encounter such charges of otherness was because their efforts to contest them were shaped by the myth of dichotomy, which by insisting on the repudiating move of denying such otherness ensures that such implications "turn towards us" (Grimes, 1998, cited in Shildrick, 2000, p. 216). A notable example of this emerged in the following interaction with Scott. Throughout his interview Scott emphatically rejected automatic and authoritative constructions of deviance and disorder, and did so very deliberately and thoroughly. Surprisingly however there were some moments when he entertained such charges of otherness:

Laura: yeah, sure. So you've got your own kind of, I guess, principles?

Scott: yeah, that's it, principles, I guess... But I mean how do you talk principles with drug use? (laughing) I don't know (laughing)

Laura: why do you say that?

Scott: well, it's not exactly a, I don't know, like (softer voice) I think maybe someone with good principles wouldn't use drugs, I don't know...

The sentiment conveyed in this comment epitomises that which characterises most of the examples presented throughout this chapter; it is the sentiment of shaken confidence in one's eligibility to be seen and treated as a normative citizen and of fearing that a position of deviance and/or disorder may constitute 'the truth' after all. Given this comment stood out as so unlike what he predominantly had to say about his drug use, and himself, it provides a striking example of the powerful effects of this less visible, more emotive way of knowing. It illustrates how those accounts of deviance and disorder Scott disavowed when 'pinning down' neoliberal subjectivity as 'the truth' about his conduct and subjectivity did not become entirely separate but rather remained active and, in this moment, turned towards him.

Arguably therefore, contrary to achieving the objective of rejecting accounts of deviance and disorder in a definitive or final sense in order to conclusively establish accounts of neoliberal citizenship as 'the truth' about their conduct and subjectivity, the participants' application of a dichotomising approach to constructing what they do and who they are left them constantly rehashing implications of otherness and prevented them from being able to form alternative understandings. Indeed, according to Hamish the ultimate effect of these ways of knowing is arguably that:

You're always left justifying yourself. And it's interesting that we use a society-created worst-case scenario to justify, because that's what society can relate to, so that IS the worst case scenario, everyone's seen it on the news, so 'I'm not that, so therefore I'm fine' (...) there's no space in between, you either don't use drugs and you're ok, or you use drugs and it just depends on how you use those drugs, how you compare to the junkie, essentially.

What he described is clearly in keeping with the critique of dichotomy presented above and with the findings that have been presented not just throughout this chapter but in chapters five and six also. As he put it, the use of positions of otherness (i.e., "a society-created worst-case scenario...the junkie") as point of comparison from which people who use illicit drugs can construct their own conduct and subjectivities in normative terms (i.e., the use of a dichotomising approach) is unworkable. Far from achieving the fixed, discrete, permanent position of normative citizen, such an approach paradoxically maintains the threat of being positioned as other and thus requires that these comparisons to "the junkie" take place over and over again. Indeed, far from making it possible to address stigmatising and marginalising constructions of one's conduct and subjectivity, such an approach means that "you're *always* left justifying yourself". Hamish thus summated the impact that these ways of knowing seemed to have on how participants made sense of their drug use and their

subjectivities. Specifically, he expressed concern about how these ways of knowing paradoxically make implications of otherness inescapable and thus enduringly tie him and others like him to the practice of repudiation, and thus conveyed the extent to which they may pose a potent barrier to change or progress in how such individuals can construct what they do and who they are.

Critically therefore, the key finding that emerged through this analysis of the less conscious dimensions of what the participants had to say concerned the inherent flaw in a dichotomising approach to constructing the world. In particular, the analysis made visible the way that the 'gut' level adoption of this taken-for-granted logic meant that the participants' constructions of what they do and who they are were limited by this flaw. Ultimately, it seemed that this flaw in the logic of dichotomy prevented the participants' capacity to construct their conduct and subjects in ways that improve upon rather than replicate the significant shortcomings in what we know and do in relation to illicit drug use and drug-using subjects. Thus, as I discuss in the final section of this chapter, the findings at this level of analysis made visible the extent to which this myth of dichotomy effected what the participants had to say (and could not say) in ways that maintained the all-too-familiar problem of a lack of change.

7.4 An unconscious attachment to dichotomy: Introducing stuckness

While the findings at the levels of litany, socio-structural conditions and worldview/discourse made visible the participants' take on particular ways of knowing that form part of the mess of divergent and disjunctive accounts, the findings at the level of myth/metaphor made visible the less conscious way of knowing that shaped their take on this mess in paradoxical and limiting ways. Specifically, the findings showed that the participants' constructions of their conduct and subjectivities were shaped by the often unthinking expectation that they can and should pin down 'the truth' about what they do and who they are. In doing so, the myth of dichotomy was thus shown to prompt participants to respond to inevitable contradictions in their conduct and subjectivities in a manner that had paradoxical and limiting effects. By prompting them to eliminate such contradiction, these ways of knowing seemed to leave participants swinging back and forth between opposing positions. Ultimately, it seemed that because of the way that the participants' efforts to address inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising constructions of their conduct and subjectivities were shaped by this myth, such efforts were far from effective. Indeed, it seemed that, paradoxically, such efforts had the effect of maintaining these problematic constructions. As I summarise below therefore, in making visible the

familiar ways in which the participants' constructions of their conduct and subjectivities were limited, the findings at this myth/metaphor level of analysis problematise this way of knowing as potentially posing a powerful barrier to change. In doing so, these findings contribute to existing critical work which problematises the attachment to such dichotomous reasoning that has come to exist as a result of a long western liberal history of making sense of the world in these terms.

In summing these findings and the emergent concerns about the effects of this dichotomising approach to the construction of the world, I draw on the work of Smith and Berg (1997), who in their in-depth analysis of conflict in groups develop a detailed understanding of the way that dichotomising practices impact on the life of a group. In describing how the cultural tradition of dichotomous reasoning makes contradiction and conflict intolerable and thus prompts groups to respond to the presence of such forces as a problem that must be resolved, they emphasise that the inevitable outcome of this approach is the emergence of a state of "stuckness" (Smith & Berg, 1997, p. 215). Defined as a state of restricted movement in thinking, reasoning, or processing in which "the exploration of new ground" fails to occur, stuckness refers to the incessant cycle in which attempts to eliminate contradiction lead to the reassertion of opposing accounts and prevent the production of alternative positions (Smith & Berg, 1997, p. 215). As they explain:

...attempts to unravel contradictory forces create a circular process that is paralysing to groups. The more that members seek to pull the contradictions apart, to separate them so that they will not be experienced as contradictory, the more enmeshed they become in the self-referential binds of paradox (p. 14).

Thus:

As the group struggles to 'solve this problem' by reconciling the opposing forces or eliminating the contradictions, pressure is created in the opposite direction in order to ensure that the full range of contradictory reactions can be expressed. The more the group tries to eliminate contradictions, the greater the pressure to reassert them (p. 211).

For Smith and Berg (1997) therefore the inevitable consequence of the dichotomising approach to conflict or contradiction that groups instinctively adopt (see chapter eight for further discussion) is a repetitive cycle of repudiation in which the group's capacity for

progress or change becomes and remains stymied. The way that the participants in the current research responded to conflict or contradiction and the effects this approach produced thus seemed to correspond with this notion of stuckness. Indeed, based on what emerged at this final level of analysis regarding the effects of this myth of dichotomy, I propose that what the participants had to say throughout their interviews could be seen as an example of stuckness in action.

7.4.1 A deeper understanding of what participants' had to say

The addition of the myth/metaphor level is what makes CLA a more unique deconstructive methodology, as it encourages exploration of dimensions of a problem that are easily left unexamined due to their low perceptibility (Bishop et al., 2013; Inayatullah, 1998;2004). Thus, although Inayatullah stresses the non-hierarchical ordering of the layers, this final lens is considered to be a critical addition to the methodology as it ensures that dimensions of a problem that may otherwise be overlooked are made visible and hence facilitates the development of a more comprehensive or expansive understanding of the problem. This was certainly the case in the current research, as including the analysis of these less conscious ways of knowing clearly facilitated the development of a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the participants' take on the mess of divergent and disjunctive account of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects.

In particular, this final level of analysis deepened my reading of the findings at the levels of litany, socio-structural conditions, and discourse/worldview. By making it possible to see how the myth of dichotomy shaped what the participants had to say about these different ways of knowing, the findings that emerged at this final level of analysis prompted me to consider the possibility that that the findings at the other three levels could be seen as reflecting the stuckness that comes out of a dichotomising approach to making sense of the world (Smith & Berg, 1997). Indeed, in making visible the way that this myth of dichotomy shaped the participants to expect that they can and must establish 'the truth' about where their conduct and subjectivities 'sit' within this mess, the findings from the level of myth/metaphor suggest that this less conscious way of knowing may have shaped what emerged at the previous three levels of analysis. Indeed, they suggest that the findings at the levels of litany, socio-structural conditions, and discourses/worldview could be read as demonstrating the participants' efforts to eliminate contradiction and work out 'the truth' about what they do and who they are. Importantly, then, this suggests that the data presented in chapters five and six, in which the participants emphatically reject

accounts of deviance and disorder and repeatedly appropriate the discourses of neoliberal subjectivity, could be seen as demonstrative of stuckness in action. That is, such findings could be seen as demonstrating how a dichotomising approach to constructing the world left participants stuck constantly rehashing accounts of deviance and disorder and re-establishing accounts of neoliberal citizenship as ‘the truth’ about their conduct and subjectivities, and thus prevented them from exploring “new ground” (Smith & Berg, 1997, p. 215) (see chapter eight for further discussion).

Indeed, the findings at the level of myth/metaphor showed how the western liberal propensity to invest in the “congenitally failing” project of attempting to permanently separate different assertions, truths, and selves (Roberts, 2005, p.637) left participants stuck reproducing inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising constructions. Specifically, in being unable to adopt any approach other than to justify themselves against “society’s worst case scenario” their efforts to address these shortcomings paradoxically reproduced them. It seemed therefore that this attachment to dichotomy posed a powerful barrier to the participants’ capacity to generate the kind of movement or change in how they are seen and treated that they clearly hoped for. This limitation is captured in a comment Lucy made when talking about her dependent use of amphetamines:

If I felt there was some niche or some way to make sense of that time that didn’t label me as a fuck-up or a deviant or... that would be helpful. If I had some story to latch onto that wasn’t completely condemning.

It was evident here that Lucy feels unable to access ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects that make it possible to construct *all* aspects of what she does and who she is without inevitable contradictions and multiplicities being inevitably othering, stigmatising and marginalising. Importantly, then, the concern she expressed here epitomises the overarching concern that emerged throughout the data: The extent to which such adequate and non-stigmatising ways of knowing seemed to be unavailable to participants. Critically therefore, the findings at this final level of analysis indicated that overall what the participants’ had to say mirrored the very lack of change that this research set out to explore (i.e., the lack of change in the inadequate and stigmatising ways in which the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are constructed). Moreover, the findings indicated that this persisting lack of change in what the participants did and did not say could be understood as the product of an unconscious, powerful and enduring cultural attachment to dichotomy, and the inability to tolerate contradictory, multiple realities this attachment generates.

Given the extent to which a lack of change forms the basis for the most prominent accounts which charge the drug-using subject with deviance and disorder (i.e., constructions of addiction – see Seear & Fraser, 2010a; valentine & Fraser, 2009), it is crucial to emphasise that the argument formed here does not see this problem of a lack of change or movement as located within the individual, but rather locates the origins and drivers of this stuckness within western liberal culture. Illustrating this point is another comment Lucy made towards the end of her interview, when talking about the different ways that she constructs her cannabis:

...these conflicts and tensions are much more a part of my life than I realise (laughing) because I do smoke weed most days. I guess every time I sit down for that little rolling-the-joint ritual some degree of this stuff passes through my system. Whereas the weeks where I don't smoke and I've got a bottle of red instead, it's not.

For Lucy therefore, the process of working out 'the truth' about her cannabis use and about herself (i.e., this process of trying to resolve "these conflicts and tensions") is something she does often without "realis[ing]" it. A plausible explanation for this is that such logic has become such an unquestioned, taken-for-granted "tradition" in western liberal culture that its influence and operation is typically beyond our awareness; meaning that this approach is not a conscious choice but rather a preconscious response or reflex. Indeed, consistent with the way that Inayatullah (1998; 2004) and others (Dzidic, 2009; Gridley, 2005) conceive of these deepest ways of knowing as operating, Peng and Nisbett (1999) explain how dichotomous reasoning has come to be the default position from which members of western liberal culture make sense of the world, not due to deliberate selection of this approach but rather because this reasoning works in the same way as "folk wisdom" – it shapes not what we consciously think through but rather what we feel and know about the world at a 'gut' level (p. 742). Critically, it is this less conscious operation of dichotomising logic which is understood to make it so problematic. Not only does it render us "blind" to non-dichotomising constructions and thus remain stuck constructing the world in ways that fail to take into account the whole picture, but it also renders us unable to notice this blindness (Peng & Nisbett, 1999, p. 751). As Foucault (1978) noted, "the success of power-knowledge mechanisms is proportional to their ability to hide themselves" (cited in Richer, 1992, p.112). Thus, this way of knowing may have posed such a powerful barrier for how the participants could and could not construct their conduct and subjectivities because of its embeddedness in our cultural makeup; as although, at a conscious level, we might be able to question this logic, at a 'gut' level, it may feel as though it is the only way to

construct the world. Unless such mythologies are made visible and thus open to contestation, therefore, it seems that their influence over our responses to and constructions of the world remain unchecked and unchanged.

Importantly, the findings from this level of myth/metaphor thus reiterate existing calls to more closely examine the benefits and effects of relying on the tactic of appropriating the discourses of neoliberal subjectivity as the solution to the inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising ways in which the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are constructed (Moore & Fraser, 2006). More broadly however, these findings raise pertinent questions about the role that this unseen and hence powerful myth of dichotomy plays in not only establishing inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising understandings of and approaches to illicit drug use and drug-using subjects but in *maintaining* these problems. Indeed, the findings impress the need to question if the effects of this less conscious way of knowing may explain why there has been such an enduring lack of change in the mess that we find ourselves in. What's more, in locating the incapacity for new ground to be explored throughout the interviews with this cultural attachment to dichotomy, this research is in keeping with the need identified by numerous critical scholars for research that resists the individualisation of the problem of AOD use and instead focuses on its cultural, political, material "constructedness" (Fraser & Moore, 2011, p. 1). Indeed, as Duff (2015) contends, this difficulty in overcoming this enormous "challenge" may be central to enduring "lack of progress" in how we understand and approach the complex issue of AOD use (p. 5; see also Fraser, Moore & Keane, 2014; Weinberg, 2013). As discussed in the final chapter, this is consistent with the hypotheses that emerge from drawing together the findings from this research, which propose that perhaps what lies at the heart of the mess we find ourselves in—i.e., what accounts for the enduring lack of change in the inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising ways that illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are constructed—are the less conscious cultural processes which shape how we can and cannot construct the world.

Chapter Eight

8. Understanding a lack of change

Despite decades of intensive debate and inquiry, concerns about the extent to which the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are constructed and approached in divergent, disjunctive, inadequate, and stigmatising ways continue to be expressed (Duff, 2012; Hammersley & Reid, 2002; Marr, 2011; Reinerman, 2005). Repeatedly, illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are constructed in ways that produce poorly contextualised, harmful, and unjust understandings of and approaches to such behaviours and those who take part in them. Yet, meaningful changes in how such conduct and subjects are constructed have failed to occur (Hathaway, 2002; Tupper, 2012; Wodak, 2012). In conducting this research, I aimed to explore these deeply problematic shortcomings and this absence of meaningful change. Indeed, it was hoped that exploring, from the perspective of people who use illicit drugs, such divergence, disjuncture, and inadequacies in how illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are constructed might generate hypotheses about how shifts in these shortcomings and this lack of change may come about.

When taken together, the findings from this exploratory research pose important questions about how best to target efforts to bring about change. Indeed, as I discuss throughout this chapter, the findings pose questions about the usefulness of efforts which solely focus on those constructions of deviance and disorder that historically and contemporarily position the acts and subjects of illicit drug use as other to dominant cultural norms and values. Specifically, I contend that the findings pose radical questions about the value of expanding efforts to bring about change to include consideration of the individual and collective effects of broader and deeper categories of thought, and of our affective ties to these. The argument I make follows that of Sarason (1974), who writes that “those who create new settings always want to do something new, usually unaware that they are armed with, and subsequently be disarmed by, categories of thought which help produce the conditions the new settings hopes to remedy” (p. xi). I argue, then, that perhaps attempts to do something new—to produce some shifts in the shortcomings in how the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are understood and approached—have continued to fall short because those seeking to bring about such change continue to be disarmed by the very categories of thought which have helped to produce this mess.

The methodology of Causal Layered Analysis is uniquely suited to exploring these joint issues of inadequate, stigmatising understandings and a lack of change. This is because

it not only emphasises the potential for poststructuralist thinking to pull apart current assemblages and make visible their epistemological and ontological workings, but also places emphasis on the capacity for such deconstructions to generate questions about alternative ways of assembling the world (Inayatullah, 2004). That is, it emphasises how the production of a fuller understanding of the range of ways in which a problem is made up and maintained can generate useful discussions about the realities or futures that are made unavailable and unthinkable through current arrangements of knowledge/power, and hence about what might be needed to make alternative realities or futures possible (Inayatullah, 2004; Bishop et al., 2013). Importantly therefore, this framework is understood to facilitate the process of *reconstruction* as well as *deconstruction* (Bishop et al. 2013). As Bishop and colleagues (2013) state, while the process of deconstruction occurs through the analysis of the multiple layers, the process of reconstruction begins with efforts to “comprehend the meaning within and between the layers” (p. 6), as these meanings not only generate an in-depth understanding of the problem, but also generate questions or proposals about alternatives/solutions to it. They write:

This final step in conducting a CLA requires the researcher to consider the overall message or finding from the analysis in relation to their initial research question. This phase marks what Futurists claim as ‘proposing alternative futures’, or in terms more readily accessible to psychology, it is when the problem is summarised and strategies proposed for its resolution. The reconstruction stage of the analysis is crucial to the analysis. It is where the researcher is able to tie together their findings across the layers to give a consolidated and defensible response to their research question. This is akin to pulling together what was identified with each lens of the microscope to convey a holistic and deep account of the phenomenon being investigated (Bishop et al., 2013, p. 6).

This final chapter is thus structured according to this final analytic step and its twin tasks of summation and proposition.

I begin this chapter with further exploration of the stuckness that emerged in the layered analysis of participants’ utterances, discussing the questions it raises about the tactic of approximating the neoliberal subject and posing hypotheses it generates about the role of threat and fear in limiting what the participants could, or more importantly, *could not* say. I then consider the broader application of this concept of stuckness, discussing how an understanding of this limiting, paradoxical process raises questions about the role of the

myth of dichotomy in producing and maintaining the mess of divergence and disjuncture we find ourselves in. In particular, I explore the role this myth may play the production and maintenance of the lack of change that has characterised western liberal constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects – a lack of change that was apparent also in the findings from the contextual analysis. In drawing on critical thinking, I again consider the need to understand the influence of threat and fear in producing and maintaining an enduring cultural propensity to construct illicit drug use and drug-using subjects in inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising terms.

In the second half of the chapter I concentrate on the objective of reconstruction. Firstly, I discuss how these findings and the meanings and hypotheses they generate contribute to and extend upon the existing case for bringing about changes in how the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are understood. Secondly, I outline the proposals that emerge out the findings and interpretations regarding what such change might take and what it might look like. Specifically, I propose how an expansive unsettling of dichotomy and moves to foreground fear may enable us to move on from the constant reproduction of such inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising understandings and approaches. Moreover, I speculate on the way that these moves might establish the grounds for fostering empathy in our constructions of the acts and subjects of illicit drug use.

8.1 Neoliberal subjectivity: An effective solution?

The findings from both parts of this research point to the ongoing cultural salience and embeddedness of constructions of the acts and subjects of illicit drug use as deviant and disordered. Throughout the interviews the participants expressed considerable objection to the way that cultural litanies and socio-structural conditions automatically, unquestioningly and inescapably position them in terms of marked, total deviance and disorder. Indeed, they emphatically expressed concerns about the way that the familiarity and saturation of assumptions of deviance and disorder make imputations of otherness the first (and often only) thing that comes to mind when responding to illicit drug use, and how they accordingly make charges of otherness, and hence the experience of stigma and marginalisation, seem inescapable. Likewise, participants consistently problematised the way that more structured ways of knowing formalise imputations of otherness and hence authorise stigmatising and marginalising approaches to such conduct and subjects. Thus in what emerged at the levels of litany and socio-structural conditions it was clear that the participants saw these automatic and structured ways of knowing as the source of deeply

inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising understandings of and approaches to them and their conduct.

It was evident in what participants voiced about discursive ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects that they saw the discourses of neoliberal citizenship as the appropriate and necessary counterpoint to the problematic ways in which they are so automatically and formally constructed as other. In problematising these automatic and structured ways of knowing, the participants simultaneously spoke extensively about the appropriateness of those constructions which, via these contemporary discourses, produce their conduct and subjectivities in normalising and legitimating terms. It was clear that, in the context of such automated and formalised charges of deviance and disorder, participants placed significant value on these discursive ways of knowing for making it possible to position their conduct and subjectivities in more adequate, reassuring and empowering ways. This was particularly apparent in the way that they drew on the discourses of the enterprising or active citizen (such as self-regulation, risk management, self-improvement, self-knowledge, and authenticity) to construct a wide variety of practices (including pushing the limits of risk, managing mental health issues, and losing control) as aligned with the ethics of the successful and enterprising neoliberal citizen. Overwhelmingly therefore, the findings at this level of analysis suggested that the participants saw the discourses of neoliberal subjectivity as the solution to the problem of the pronounced and marked ways in which their conduct and subjectivities are understood and approached in inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising terms. Indeed, it was abundantly evident throughout the data that the participants saw these contemporary discourses as providing a reassuring and legitimate recourse for rejecting automatic and formal charges of deviance and disorder as inapplicable to their individual actions and selves. In her analysis of the way such contemporary discourses were drawn upon by people who use illicit drugs in Sweden to Rødner-Sznitman (2008) likewise found that the people who use illicit drugs she interviewed “present[ed] themselves and their drug use as somehow part of mainstream culture and norms” in order to “oppose the stereotyped image of drug addicts in Sweden” (p. 469). Importantly, in describing this practice of appropriating the discourses of neoliberal subjectivity, she notes that it is unsurprising that people who use illicit drugs often see such discourses as so valuable and beneficial, as the constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects they produce are more likely to be seen as credible and acceptable than those formed via more radical strategies of stigma management because they have such cultural salience and legitimacy.

Critically however, as the final finding which emerged at the level of worldview/discourse showed, one of the key ways that the participants drew on these discourses to establish such normalising and empowering constructions was by contrasting their own responsible, controlled, ethical, productive, and moral conduct and subjectivities with the ostensibly irresponsible, compulsive, unethical, unproductive and immoral conduct and subjectivities of 'other' drug users. Indeed, at numerous points throughout the interviews it became apparent that the reassurance and empowerment the participants derived from these discursive ways of knowing occurred through the practice of positioning certain drug-using practices and subjects in terms of deviance and disorder. It was clear that, by generating a sense of confidence by way of contrast (Manderson, 2005, 2011), doing so afforded the participants the power to be constructed as successful, legitimate, and hence worthy citizens. Thus, it became clear that the participants saw the establishment of this contrast as an effective way to redress the extent to which their conduct and subjectivities are misunderstood and thus seen and treated in stigmatising and marginalising ways.

Consistent with existing critique (Moore & Fraser, 2006), this finding thus raised concerns about the potential limits or even problematic effects that may accompany the benefits of empowerment and normalisation generated via this discursive practice. Indeed, the analysis provided examples of the way that this practice can further stigmatise and marginalise those drug-using practices and subjects that do not readily align with the norms and values of neoliberal citizenship and hence place expectations on people who use illicit drugs to act autonomously, responsibly, and rationally in ways that are not realisable (for anyone) in the context of various social, structural, political, psychological, and material constraints (Fitzgerald et al., 2004; Fraser, 2004; Halperin, 1995; Lupton, 1997; Moore & Fraser, 2006; Sedgewick, 1994; Valverde, 1997; valentine & Fraser, 2008; Weinberg, 2013). Critically however, such concerns about the counterproductive effects of this practice were deepened and broadened in the findings at the level of myth/metaphor, where the capacity for this dichotomising approach to produce any robust benefits came into question. Indeed, in showing how this dichotomising approach and the feelings of reassurance and empowerment it generated did not effectively address the extent to which the participants were positioned in stigmatising and marginalising ways but instead reproduced and maintained these problematic constructions, this final set of findings generated significant questions about the effectiveness of tackling inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising constructions in this way.

Importantly therefore, the findings from the final level of analysis extend on existing critique which calls for caution or scepticism (Moore & Fraser, 2006) towards what appear to be the obvious benefits of constructing illicit drug use and drug-using subjects in terms of neoliberal subjectivity. As discussed, such work points out that this approach to addressing the shortcomings in how illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are constructed may only benefit those individuals whose practices and circumstances readily align with the neoliberal subject, and thus may risk further stigmatising and marginalising those individuals that cannot be readily positioned in this way. However, the findings from the level of myth/metaphor also suggested that the empowerment and reassurance participants gained from this tactic were curtailed, or even negated by, the fact that these benefits relied upon the reproduction of inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising constructions of their conduct and subjectivities. Thus, following on from Moore and Fraser's (2006) work, the in-depth analysis of the participants' approach to addressing these shortcomings raises questions about the cause for more radical scepticism towards this tactic, as the findings indicated that its premise of dichotomy may preclude the possibility for such discursive manoeuvres to produce any meaningful benefits (as long as they continue to be tied to the premise of dichotomy). Importantly however, I acknowledge the significant value the participants placed on the discourses of neoliberal subjectivity throughout their interviews. I wish to stress, therefore, that the argument presented below does not intend to dismiss these discourses as being of *no* value (also because this would constitute yet another dichotomising move). Rather, I aim to establish an argument for reconfiguring the dichotomised structure of such discourses so that the capacity to be credibly seen and treated as successful, legitimate citizen and person does not rest on the full and uninterrupted performance of those values which ascribe such success and legitimacy (i.e., autonomy, responsibility, productivity, etc.).

8.1.1 Dichotomy: A paradoxical, flawed solution

The findings at the level of myth/metaphor suggested that by aiming to address the problem of inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising understandings with the complete disavowal of charges of deviance and disorder, and establishing accounts of neoliberal citizenship as 'the truth', the participants constructed their conduct and subjectivities in a manner that leaves groups stuck in the "self-referential binds of paradox" (Smith & Berg, 1997, p. 14). Through the analysis of the less visible and affective dimensions of the interview data it became apparent that this dichotomising approach did not produce the kind of permanent, full reassurance and empowerment the participants hoped for but

instead paradoxically reproduced stigmatising and marginalising positions. Thus, consistent with Smith and Berg's (1997) notion of stuckness, this dichotomising response to conflicting or different ways of knowing seemed to be deeply flawed, as it ultimately seemed to maintain rather than solve the problem.

This was evident in the findings at the level of worldview/discourse, where the participants' efforts to reject constructions of deviance and disorder resulted in the reproduction of constructions of irresponsible, compulsive, disreputable, unproductive, undisciplined and unhealthy drug-using practices and subjects. It was also evident at the myth/metaphor level, where they were shown at times to position their own conduct and subjectivities in terms of such otherness (i.e., as untrustworthy, disreputable, compulsive, irresponsible, unprincipled, etc.). Moreover, it was evident in the way that this dichotomising approach affected what the participants *could not say* throughout the interviews; specifically, the way it ruled out the opportunity for participants to construct *all* aspects of their conduct and subjectivities (including those that compete with the norms and values of neoliberal citizenship) in ways that do not threaten their eligibility to be seen and treated as legitimate and valued citizens and ultimately as people. Indeed, this stuckness was apparent in the way that a dichotomising approach prevented participants from accessing ways of knowing through which they could adequately construct the multiple, competing realities of their illicit drug use without having to justify them as normative rather than deviant and disordered. Thus, such stuckness was evident in the way that, when constructing their inevitably multiple and competing actions and subjectivities, participants were limited to the project of establishing 'the truth' about these interminable conflicts and tensions in the hope that such otherness would be disavowed once and for all. Paradoxically, then, the ultimate outcome of this solution for participants seemed to be the perpetuation of the very problem of a lack of change – i.e., the continued absence and unavailability of those stories or niches in which *all* aspects of what they do and who they are can be accounted for without multiplicity and contradiction being, as Lucy put it, "completely condemning".

Critically therefore, in keeping with critical deconstructions of the logic of dichotomy (Crawford, 1994; Derrida, 1976; Serres, 1995; Shildrick, 2000), the influence of this myth on how the participants could and could not make sense of their conduct and subjectivities was shown to be a powerful barrier to change. Indeed, what emerged in the interview data as the outcome of this dichotomising approach seemed to epitomise why, as Fraser and Moore (2008) write, Serres (1998) is so "motivated by a rejection of what he

calls the 'dualistic hell' of binary thinking", because such logic so powerfully precludes the capacity to promote a state of "openness and multiplicity" and thus prevents access to "a space of possibility, out of which new thought can emerge" (p. 749). For Fraser and Moore (2008), therefore, this is why our efforts to bring about meaningful change in the problematic ways that the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are understood and approached should perhaps be more concerned with promoting the capacity to "open up a space in/through which non-binarising, non-ordering, non-normalising conceptions of illicit drug use and its problems can be generated" (p. 749). Again therefore, the findings seemed to reiterate this existing critique, as it was evident in the interview data—in particular, in what was absent in it—that despite the reassurance and empowerment dichotomising practices produced, this approach did not open up such space for movement or possibility for change but rather reproduced the very problem participants expected it to address.

Importantly, questions about the limitations of this approach to addressing the shortcomings in how illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are constructed were not isolated to the findings from the intensive interviews but also emerged in the findings from the textual analysis. Indeed, the most noteworthy finding that emerged from the analysis of local and national Australian news-media texts concerned the way that in certain texts the discourses of neoliberal citizenship operated to construct the act and subject of illicit drug use in ways that were just as stigmatising, marginalising, and dehumanising as accounts of deviance and disorder. In some texts these accounts of individual choice and rational decision-making were shown to construct people who use illicit drugs as not only failing the tasks or ethics of neoliberal citizenship (such as the prioritisation of health over pleasure, the appropriate management of risk, and the development and application of adequate self-knowledge) but as also entirely culpable for (and hence deserving of) any harm they encountered. Thus, this analysis highlighted that in these texts accounts of neoliberal subjectivity did not have the effect of replacing or suitably addressing the problematic accounts of deviance and disorder, but rather operated as another "cohabitee in the field" (Seddon, 2010, p. 340) of accounts which construct the individual who uses illicit drugs as markedly and pervasively different from dominant cultural norms and values. Once again, this finding raises questions about the tactic of adopting a dichotomising approach to challenging the problems with how illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are constructed. Indeed, this finding could arguably be seen as pointing to the paradoxical upshot of the contemporary push to address the longstanding demonization and pathologisation of the acts and subjects of illicit drug use through the construction of autonomous and

responsibilised drug-using practices and subjectivities. That is, in the texts analysed this practice seemed to operate as a “reverse discourse tactic” – an approach to resistance or change which “uncritically mimics the strategy of the oppressor instead of offering a different set of terms” (Butler, 1993, p. 19).

Critically then, it seemed the most pertinent themes that tie together the findings from both parts of this research are those of dichotomy and stuckness. Both sets of findings raise questions about the effectiveness of the tactic of aligning drug-using practices and subjects with norms and values of neoliberal citizenship; suggesting that the dichotomising basis of this approach may render it incapable of generating meaningful change and instead have the paradoxical effect of reproducing inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising understandings and approaches. Both analyses thus impress the need to consider adopting a greater scepticism (Moore & Fraser, 2006) towards attempts to bring about change in this manner; suggesting that this solution may in fact replicate and maintain the very problem it sets out to address. However in building a case for this scepticism, and in generating productive questions about a potential otherwise to this approach, it seems important to look more closely at *why* what appears to be a flawed approach remains so valued and continues to be so consistently relied upon.

As discussed in chapter seven, it seemed that this approach dominated what the participants had to say because the myth-like operation of logic of dichotomy meant that at a less conscious level this was how participants made sense of their conduct and subjectivities. Critically however, Smith and Berg’s (1997) conceptualisation of stuckness proposes that another key factor which drives this lack of movement is the affect that accompanies dichotomous reasoning. Specifically, they propose that the fears that arise from the threat that dichotomy attaches to the occurrence of conflict or contradiction is central to the production and maintenance of stuckness. Indeed, according to Smith and Berg (1997), groups unconsciously interpret such conflict or contradiction as a threat to their productivity, or worse to their continued existence; they thus contend that it is these unconscious fears which produces and maintains the drive to eliminate conflicting or contradictory assertions. In the interest of developing a more thorough understanding of the stuckness that emerged in what the participants had to say, therefore, it seems important to question if such threats and fears could likewise have shaped the way they made sense of their conduct and subjectivities, as perhaps these unconscious affective forces offer a deeper understanding of their investment in establishing neoliberal subjectivity as ‘the truth’ about what they do and who they are.

8.2 Dichotomy as a survival practice: Are alternatives too threatening to be thinkable?

For Smith and Berg (1997), it is important to acknowledge that the presence of contradiction is something that group members experience as “powerful, albeit unconscious threat” because they “fear that conflicting and apparently mutually exclusive reactions will tear the group apart” (p. 211), as the authors see this sense of threat as the primary force which drives the group to feel that they must eliminate opposing positions. It is thus considered to be this fear which renders the group stuck in the paradoxical cycle of attempting to pull apart contradictory positions. Importantly therefore, although Smith and Berg (1997) stress the unworkability of such dichotomising responses to this threat of contradiction, they note that understanding the dramatic nature of this threat makes it possible to see that “the group’s attempts to eliminate these contradictions are very understandable responses” (p. 211). Indeed, the nature of this threat leads Smith and Berg (1997) to conclude that “stuckness is an indication of the survival instincts of the group” (p. 215).

Taking Smith and Berg’s (1997) understanding of stuckness into consideration thus suggests that explanations of an attachment to dichotomising practices which purely focus on the history and entrenchment of dichotomy may not be sufficient, as perhaps it is the affect—specifically the fear and anxiety—that accompanies such practices which plays a key role in producing and maintaining such an attachment to them. Indeed, what such thinking proposes is that alternative responses to such contradiction may often be so inaccessible, not just because the unconscious and ingrained nature of a dichotomising approach makes them unavailable, but *also* because their affective nature makes them too threatening to be unthinkable. That is, Smith and Berg’s (1997) thinking suggests that perhaps a significant barrier to accessing alternative responses is the fact that eliminating contradiction feels like a matter of survival. This contention is consistent with critical work into the application of differentiating or dichotomising practices in an individual context, which likewise pairs such practices of identity work with the notion of survival.

With the increasing centrality of self and identity in the production and distribution of knowledge/power in western liberal culture, in which one’s identity or subject positioning has come to be synonymous with our ability to influence the world and with our worth within this world (Rose, 1996b), the project of securing valued identities or subjectivities has become vitally important. Indeed, according to Bauman (2006), the possibility of losing one’s “place in the world – a position in the social hierarchy, identity

(class, gender, ethnic, religious), and more generally an immunity to social degradation and exclusion” (p. 4) now constitutes one of the key threats that members of western liberal culture face. Thus, because there are such dramatic stakes attached to the security of one’s identity or subject position, the practices of identity work (i.e., of differentiation and signification) through which it is anticipated that the boundaries of one’s place in the world can be secured, have been described by some as “survival practices” (Collinson, 2003, p. 536; see also Gagnon, 2008; Hillier, Dempsey, & Harrison, 1999; Ybema et al., 2011; Yochelson & Samenow, 1979).

According to Collinson (2003), this metaphor of survival is a cogent way to convey the complex reasons why individuals invest in attempts to secure their positioning as fixed and cohesive through these practices of signification and differentiation. He notes that:

while the notion of ‘survival’ might seem a little melodramatic (Noon & Blyton, 1997), it is intended to address the complex ways that individuals may try to protect and secure themselves in a physical, economic, and/or symbolic sense within disciplinary regimes (p. 536).

Like Smith and Berg (1997), therefore, he sees a sense of threat and the corresponding need to ensure the survival of one’s positioning as central to the individual’s implementation of dichotomising identity practices. For Ybema and colleagues’ (2011), it is more simply put as being a matter of “self-survival” – a “shoring up” of not just “threatened identities” but of “an essential ‘self’” (pp. 310-311). Thus this again suggests that the extent to which such a sense of threat is attached to the task of pinning down or securing one’s positioning may make the notion of adopting alternative responses to those encounters, which push on the boundaries of such positioning (i.e., those instances of contradiction or multiplicity), seem too threatening to be thinkable. Again, the possibility of *not* taking up this project and these dichotomising practices is understood to be too risky as the dichotomising structure of one’s positioning leads to the expectation that the continued existence of their place in the world, and thus of their access to resources, social worth, influence and so forth, depends on the completion of this project.

So, if the threat that dichotomous logic attaches to the task of separating, dividing, fixing is understood to pose a powerful barrier to exploring different ways of making sense of the world, how might this contribute to an understanding of the stuckness that emerged in what the participants had to say? As is discussed in the next section, when consideration is given to the meaning the participants may have made of contradictions in their conduct

and subjectivities—in particular, what they may have felt to be the implications of such inconsistencies—it seems that these unconscious, affective processes offer a compelling hypothesis regarding what, in part, may have made alternative approaches to contradiction so absent in what the participants had to say.

8.2.1 The threat of social death

Constructions of illicit drug use are frequently paired with death (AVIL, 2011; Elliot & Chapman, 2000). Most explicitly this occurs through media reporting, political rhetoric and epidemiological analyses which emphasise the literal risk of death from the use of illicit drugs. However, illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are often also paired with the metaphor of death. As Wolfe (2007) writes, this both reflects and produces the extent to which dominant understandings of and approaches to such conduct and subjects position them in ways that have the effect of threatening their very existence as subjects, as people, even as humans:

The metaphoric equation of drug use, evil and death arguably helps effect what some analysts have termed “social death”, the process by which individuals are alienated from networks of family or friends, and reduced to objects acted upon rather than subjects accorded any authority of their own (p. 250).

As is discussed below, this notion that the implications of the ways in which drug-using subjects are typically positioned can be likened to the process of social death provokes compelling questions about the nature of the threat that is attached to the project of securing one’s normative positioning for such individuals. Thus, in this section I introduce the concept of social death and draw on the findings from the interviews to speculate about the possibility that this kind of dramatic threat may have contributed to the stuckness that emerged in what they had to say by making the prospect of not investing in the task of securing their neoliberal citizenship feel too threatening to be thinkable.

Social death is a term used by sociologists to construct the transition that occurs when individuals are deemed unable to participate in social life due to deteriorated physical functioning but who are not literally deceased (Mulkay & Ernst, 1991), such as “those in the final stages of a lengthy terminal illness” and “the very old” (Sweeting & Gilhooly, 1997, p. 96). However, because it has been explained as describing “those suffering from loss of their essential personhood” (Sweeting & Gilhooly, 1997, p. 96), it is a term that can also be used to construct the particularly pronounced forms of stigma and marginalisation which result in them being treated as “non-persons” (Mulkay & Ernst,

1991; see also Goffman, 1959) or being thought of “as being, for all practical purposes, dead or nonexistent” (Kalish, 1968, p. 254, cited in Sweeting & Gilhooly, 1997, p. 94; see also Whitehead, 2001). It is thus a term that seems to appositely and movingly convey the effects of the pronounced stigma and marginalisation that the participants spoke of. In particular, the notion of social death seems to correspond closely with what the participants described as the routine and automatic ways in which they tend to be seen and treated because of their use of illicit drugs (as documented in chapter five).

The findings from the contextual analysis lend support to this suggestion that the stigmatisation and marginalisation of the acts and subjects of illicit drug use could be likened to this process of social death. In showing how a host of constructions of deviance and disorder operated in media texts to construct drug-using subjects as incapable of productive participation in social and economic life, as irrevocably corrupted, contaminated, or compromised (be it physically and /or psychologically) and ultimately as dehumanised, these findings provided examples of the way that people who use illicit drugs can be seen and treated in ways that imply they are “reduced to objects” and treated as lacking “any authority of their own” (Wolfe, 2007, p. 250), and ultimately in ways that position them as no longer “exist[ing] as persons or as having an “essential personhood” (Sweeting & Gilhooly, 1997, p. 96). Such concerns also consistently emerged in what the participants had to say about the most automatic ways in which their conduct and subjectivities are constructed. For example, when asked about what he would like to see change in relation to the way that people who use illicit drugs are treated, Blake stated that he would like people to “have a little bit more time for them and, like, actually see them as a person not like, you know, a junkie or anything like that”. Arguably therefore, the kind of stigma and marginalisation that Blake spoke of (i.e., the extent to which such individuals are so often seen and treated in ways that undermine their eligibility to be thought of “as a person” who is deserving of one’s time) corresponds closely with the notion of social death. Similarly, some participants expressed concern about the way that they can be seen and treated in ways that denote that they no longer matter – in which they are “written off” (Hamish) as a “lost cause” (Bill). The exclusion they spoke of, in which they are seen and treated as non-existent in certain ways, thus seems to closely correspond with the notion of social death. Indeed, consistent with the concerns expressed by many critical writers, participants spoke on a number of occasions about the extent to which automatic constructions of drug-using subjects strip them of “inherent human worth” (Fraser & Moore, 2008, p. 746) and result in them being not only seen and treated as “a lesser human

being” (Rance et al., 2012, p. 249) but as lacking “human qualities” (UK Drug Policy Commission, 2012, p. 11) or any humanness at all (Rance & Treloar, 2015).

This suggests the participants may have seen those aspects of their conduct and subjectivities that conflict with the neoliberal subject as having the kinds of implications that, in bringing into effect such dramatic forms of stigma and marginalisation, equate to this ineligibility to be regarded and approached as a person, or indeed as a human. Importantly then, if this is what on some level the participants felt was at stake when attempting to establish accounts of neoliberal citizenship as ‘the truth’ about their conduct and subjectivities, perhaps their stuckness too could be understood as an indication of their “survival instincts” (Smigh & Berg, 1997, p. 215). Likewise, if the threat of losing one’s place in the world (Bauman, 2006)—or in this case the threat of losing one’s very right/eligibility to be seen and treated as human—contributed to their use of the practices of disavowal and alignment, perhaps conceiving of them as survival practices (Collinson, 2003) provides a deeper understanding of their reliance on this tactic. It thus seems important to consider the possibility that the dramatic nature of what the participants felt to be at stake when encountering contradictions in their conduct and subjectivities operated as a powerful unconscious emotive force which tied them to the practice of trying to eliminate these contradictions (i.e., which kept them stuck). Perhaps their fear of what would transpire if they did not establish that what they do and who they are can be fully, uninterruptedly positioned in normative terms made the prospect of not investing in this project feel too threatening or risky to be thinkable. That is, perhaps this “prophecy of ‘social death’” (Whitehead, 2001, p. 445) posed a powerful barrier to the exploration of alternative ways of constructing their conduct and subjectivities.

In hypothesising that a dichotomising approach may have prevented participants from forming alternative constructions by making such alternatives seem too threatening, the above argument not only raises questions about the limiting effects of the *logic* of dichotomy, but also the limiting effects of the *fear* that this way of knowing generates. Importantly, critical theory likewise proposes that such threat and fear play a central role driving a dichotomising approach to constructing the world. Indeed, some critical writers (Cohen, 2000; Crawford, 1994; Manderson, 2005, 2011) contend that it is such threat and fear which drives the production of the acts and subjects of illicit drug use as markedly, fully other. As I discuss below, therefore, it seems important to question if, and how, these unconscious affective processes may have similar limiting effects for western (neo)liberal culture more broadly. Specifically, the above interpretations suggest that it may be valuable

to ask if perhaps the mess that characterises how the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are constructed more broadly in western (neo)liberal culture can likewise be understood as an example of stuckness in action. Thus, in aiming to better understand the shortcomings in how such conduct and subjects are constructed, and why these have remained so enduring, perhaps it is important to *also* examine the role that unconscious affective forces may play in producing and maintaining a collective propensity to invest in the project of pulling apart, separating, fixing the world and its subjects.

8.3 Learning from this stuckness: Can it explain the mess we find ourselves in?

Understanding how the participants' constructions may have been shaped by fear of the dramatic implications that a dichotomising approach attaches to the inability to fully, permanently position their conduct and subjectivities in normative terms raises questions about the role these interlocking processes may play in maintaining inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising understandings of and approaches to illicit drug use and drug-using subjects. Indeed, understanding how these processes seemed to play out in the interview data suggests that perhaps a deeper understanding of why these shortcomings remain so enduring may emerge through exploration of these processes of contradiction, dichotomy, fear and stuckness at a cultural level. As I argue below, a number of issues identified in existing critique, along with the findings from the contextual analysis, coalesce to form a strong rationale for asking such questions about the potential similarities between what emerged in the interview data and what occurs at a broader cultural level. In this section I thus outline the case for questioning if the stuckness that emerged in what the participants had to say may, in part, explain why there has been little meaningful change in how the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are understood and approached in western liberal culture (Duff, 2015; Hathaway, 2002; Tupper, 2012; Seddon, 2007, 2010).

8.3.1 History repeats: An outcome of seeking "clarity at all costs"?

When looking at what has been said about the mess that this research set out to examine, it could be argued that it shares numerous features with the state of stuckness that Smith and Berg (1997) envisage. As discussed, they define stuckness as the lack of exploration of new ground that comes out of efforts to eliminate contradiction by pulling apart differing positions to make them opposing and mutually exclusive; it is thus not about immobility but rather about the restricted motion of making the same move over and over again. Thus, given that constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects in western liberal and neoliberal culture have been characterised by constant, unsuccessful attempts to pin down "the 'real' nature of the phenomenon" (Seddon, 2010, p. 340)—described as "a

chronicle of conceptual acrobatics” (Reinarman, 2005, p. 311)—which have produced an enduring “conceptual crisis” (Shaffer, 1986), an ever-growing mess of divergence and disjuncture (Duff, 2012) and very little meaningful change (Hathaway, 2002; Tupper, 2012), it seems that it may be appropriate and instructive to ask: is western (neo)liberal culture stuck too?

Many critical scholars have noted that since western liberal culture came to ‘know of’, or rather produce (Berridge & Edwards, 1981), the ‘problems’ of addiction and illicit drugs we have seen little more than the constant reiteration of the same concern about which of two ostensibly opposing sets of accounts constitutes ‘the truth’ about such conduct and subjects – from debate about whether it is moral or physical problem (Valverde, 1998), to debate about whether it is a biological disease or a psychological disorder (Edwards & Gross, 1979), and more recently about whether it constitutes a health issue or a legal issue (Brook & Stringer, 2005), or if it is a matter of compulsion or choice (Seear & Fraser, 2010a), and so on. Indeed, as Lancaster, Seear, and Treloar (2015) note, there is an explicit, enduring, and “complex duality” in how drug-using subjects can be seen; with certain frameworks producing them as “irrational devalued, non-citizens, whose conduct is constituted as always already unsafe, dangerous, risky and irrational” whilst others construct them as “rational citizens making safe, harm-reducing, responsible choices” (p. 6).

What is highlighted by this history therefore is that debate around how best to understand and approach the acts and subjects of illicit drug use has been characterised by only nominal variations. Indeed, as Australian journalist David Marr (2011) puts it, it seems that “debate on the subject remains as primitive as ever...After all these years we are still dealing with the basics – over and over again” (p. 202; see also Fraser, 2015; Weinberg, 2013); an observation that was certainly upheld in how such conduct and subjects were constructed in the news-media texts I analysed. Indeed, as discussed, what stood out in findings from the textual analysis was the extent to which in two very different types of news-media texts the contemporary discourses of responsibility and autonomy did not have the effect of contesting or replacing those of irrationality and compulsion but rather operated alongside them to charge the acts and subjects of illicit drug use with the same marked otherness that last 200 years has seen produced over and over. Overall, therefore, what emerged through this initial analysis was the theme of a lack of change or progress in the way that such conduct and subjectivities were constructed in these texts. These findings thus add to the already well-established concerns about this lack of change in the

inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising ways that the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are constructed. Importantly, then, there seem to be sufficient grounds for questioning if the problems we face in understanding and approaching illicit drug use and drug-using subjects can be characterised as a problem of repeated efforts to fix, secure, establish 'the truth' and a corresponding lack of movement – that is, as a problem of “stuckness” (Smith & Berg, 1997, p. 215).

The findings that emerged in the textual analysis and in the analysis of the stuckness that emerged in the interview data thus suggest that in attempting to understand and address these longstanding shortcomings perhaps we need to more closely examine the influence of dichotomous logic. Specifically, they propose that in attempting to understand and address these shortcomings perhaps we should not only consider if and how this stuckness/this mess has been established by the logic of dichotomy but also question if and how this tradition of dichotomy may *maintain it* (i.e., to question if and how it may work as a barrier to change or progress). Eisenberg's (2001) reflections lend support to this line of inquiry:

We run into trouble, both individually and collectively, when we seek clarity at all costs, when we aspire to establish some transcendent truth 'once and for all'. Harboring such aspirations leads people to 'lock in' to a particular way of thinking...Having done this, what we gain in certainty we lose in possibility, in equal and predictable amounts (p. 540).

It seems appropriate to ask, therefore, if perhaps we have run into the kind of trouble which mirrors that which the participants encountered (i.e., of swinging back and forth between ostensibly opposing accounts) because collectively western liberal culture has likewise invested in the project of seeking “clarity at all costs”—i.e., of constructing the world in dichotomous terms—only to find that this search continually, paradoxically reproduces a lack of clarity, and thus only to find that we as a culture have likewise become locked into this flawed and limiting way of knowing about the world. As I discuss next, it thus seems pertinent to question if this propensity to seek such clarity, and the resultant trouble or stuckness we find ourselves in, may be driven by certain, inevitable contradictions that are collectively experienced as deeply threatening, and hence which we collectively strive to eliminate.

8.3.1 The threat to 'self': An emotional force underlying this history?

In this section I discuss how critical work which addresses the role that *affective* unconscious processes play in the production of 'others' adds to the rationale for questioning if and how Smith and Berg's (1997) concept of stuckness may explain the history of repeated, unchanged shortcomings in how the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are constructed. As discussed, Smith and Berg (1997) see the threat of insecurity that dichotomous logic attaches to contradictory forces as a powerful unconscious force which instigates and maintains a group's investment in separating out and fixing opposing positions in the hope of eliminating this threat. To them, therefore, the unconscious process which drives such stuckness is this unseen, unchallenged sense of threat/fear. Importantly, this threat of insecurity is precisely what some critical researchers contend instigates and maintains our cultural investment in attempting to separate out and fix difference; in particular, critical theory emphasises that these practices are driven by the insecurity of the selfhood that forms the basis of western liberal culture and its mechanisms of governance.

Research into the prolific practice of dividing the world according to race, gender, sexuality, socio-economic status, and so forth often identifies the distribution of power and resources as the key motivation (Ang, 2003; Butler, 1993; Foucault, 1979; Goffman, 1963; Hall, 1997; Haraway, 1992; Houborg & Bjerge, 2011; Jaworski & Coupland, 2005; Matza, 1969; Parker & Aggleton, 2003). Such research thus sees these dividing practices (Foucault, 1980) as a move designed to ensure that particular arrangements of power and distributions of resources are protected. However, a range of critical work emphasises the importance of *also* understanding the unconscious emotional processes which drive these practices (Crawford, 1994; Clarke, 1999; Joffe, 1996; Jonson, 2005; Manderson, 2005, 2011; Shildrick, 2000). Indeed, some argue that what more broadly underlies such constructions of 'us' and 'them' are our fears about the insecurity of the very notion of 'the self' (through which, as Rose (1996b) emphasises, current arrangements of power and distributions of resources are made meaningful and hence realisable) and the corresponding need to eliminate this threat by attempting to secure this self. As discussed below, therefore, such thinking asserts that constructions of the other constitute our collective response to the inevitable contradictions that push on the boundary of this ostensibly fixed, cohesive self – that is, in keeping with Smith and Berg's (1997) conceptualisation of stuckness, they are understood to be the product of our collective efforts to eliminate such contradiction in

order to secure this version of selfhood which is considered to be so vital to the continuation of 'life as we know it' (Harpham, 2003, cited in Manderson, 2011).

As discussed in chapter seven, in drawing together post-structural and psychoanalytic ideas numerous researchers have shown how the dichotomous structure of the 'self' makes it inevitably insecure (Collinson, 2003; Butler, 1993; 1997; Harding, 2007; Knights & Wilmott, 1989; Roberts, 2005). What's more, some authors have also shown how the practices of differentiation, signification, division, and so forth can be understood as a response to this inevitable insecurity – as our collective efforts to address this threat (Crawford, 1994; Shildrick, 2000). According to Crawford (1994), for example, western liberal culture's approach to constructing the world is driven by an underlying "fear that the boundaries which distinguish self from other cannot be maintained" (p. 1355). He stresses that we can "never secure...the modern, conventional formation of self and its contemporary reformulations" because "experiences that fall outside the limits of legitimate selfhood" will always "press on those boundaries and, at least, implicitly bring them into question" (p. 1355). Consequently, he sees the threat these contradictions pose and the fear this elicits as what drives western liberal culture to produce certain conduct and subjects as other to dominant cultural norms and values:

The creation of an external other, people and groups that are negatively stereotyped, deters these conflicts from being openly and fully engaged. The experienced discomfort of internal conflict is temporarily resolved by devaluing, denying, and repressing the proscribed or conflicted aspects of the self and by recreating an imagined and seemingly safer unity through externalisation (Crawford, 1994, p. 1355).

Focusing on the production of corporeal forms of otherness, Shildrick (2000) similarly sees anxieties about the security of the fixed, discrete self (which includes the notion of discrete, impermeable body), and the corresponding need to secure it, as underpinning western liberal culture's production of otherness:

As postmodernist theory makes clear, the self's clean and proper body, to use Julia Kristeva's term, is not a given, but instead an unstable construct under constant threat. On the one hand there is the potential of internal leakage and loss of form, while on the other, there is a risk from the circulation of all those dangerous bodies—women, racial others, the sick, the monstrous—who both occupy the place of the other and serve to define by difference the self's own parameters (p. 216).

For both Crawford (1994) and Shildrick (2000) therefore, the fact members of western liberal culture are constantly confronted by the inevitable insecurity of the notion of the fixed, discrete, cohesive and bounded self/body and the anxious need to eradicate such threats by (albeit “temporarily”) re-establishing these “parameters” is what lies at the heart of the prolific construction of others. Thus, in Smith and Berg’s (1997) terms, the production of such cultural others is understood here as reflecting the collectively-felt need to eliminate the threat of contradiction and conflict in the hope that doing so will ensure the survival of this version of selfhood and hence ensure the survival of our way of life (Harpham, 2003, cited in Manderson, 2011).

Such thinking thus provides a sound basis for questioning if the reason we find ourselves reproducing the same mess when it comes to the construction of the acts and subjects of illicit drug use over and over again, is because these constructions constitute a collective “survival practice” (Collinson, 2003, p.536). In fact, this is precisely what some researchers contend (Cohen, 2000; Crawford, 1994; Manderson, 2005, 2011; Stein, 1990); arguing that this unconscious sense of threat and fear in relation to the insecurity of the fixed, discrete, cohesive self is central to the production of the drug-using other. Indeed, such work suggests that the enduring reliance upon this particular cultural other may be explained by the way that, in being constructed as so markedly and fully other to the normative subject, it so readily and comprehensively establishes all the essential parameters of this normative self; or more radically because it is *the* counterpoint through which this normative subject comes to exist (Fraser & Moore, 2011).

This argument has most comprehensively been made by Australian academic Desmond Manderson (2005; 2011), who asserts that this unconscious sense of threat and fear surrounding the survival of the western liberal model of selfhood is central to the shortcomings in how illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are constructed in western liberal culture. Based on his analysis of the similarities between the way that witchcraft and witches were constructed and approached in the middle-ages (a time of cultural unease about the insecurity of the influence of the church would be undermined) and the way that illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are constructed and approached in modern and contemporary liberal culture (where a similar cultural unease, this time about the insecurity of the western liberal model of selfhood, is apparent), Manderson (2005) argues that “it is time to psychoanalyse our drug policies, searching for the irrational fears and anxieties that lie at its heart” (p. 36; see also 2011, p. 226). Indeed, he enjoins us to consider that the

most powerful mechanisms which shape western liberal culture's constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are those which are deeply emotional and unconscious:

Like other cultural productions such as politics and art, law serves as the medium for the symbolisation and social transmission of ideals, desires and anxieties. Now the privileged form in which the individual unconscious expresses these deep structuring devices is through their metaphorical representation and transformation in dreams. Institutions similarly express themselves through metaphors – symbols that stand for *something else*, something implicit and deeply felt but poorly understood. Laws have a daily meaning, but they also have a night-time meaning, the unconscious and metaphorical representation of a drive (Manderson, 2011, p. 226, emphasis original).

Thus he contends that western liberal culture's illicit drug laws and policies originate from and are maintained by non-conscious, non-rational drives.

According to Manderson (2011), the crux of the unconscious, irrational basis for producing the deviant and disordered drug-using other through our laws and policies is the "crisis of belief" that surrounds the notion of the fixed, discrete, cohesive self (p. 230). That is, he argues that these constructions constitute our attempt to address our fears about the insecurity of this self that arise from the "snags and inconsistencies" that inevitably disrupt and hence threaten this sense of self (p. 230). Indeed, he sees the inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising understandings of illicit drug use as arising from, and being maintained by, this crisis of belief and the irrational need for the drug-using other it produces:

For if drugs show us what it's like to be 'possessed', and therefore to lose one's identity and one's capacity for individual agency, we rest assured, by way of contrast, in our own autonomy. The standard portrayal of the drug addict, dulled and immured in incapacity, reassures us of their absolute otherness. The solidarity, the certainty, of our identity is shored up by vivid contrast with theirs (Manderson, 2011, p. 230).

The collective drive to shore up, to secure, to fix this discrete, autonomous self is thus offered as an explanation for the enduring collective propensity to separate out the acts and subjects of illicit drug use as absolutely other and the lack of progress or change that accompanies these efforts. Critically therefore, in contending that this drive to eliminate the "snags and inconsistencies" which threaten the security, "the certainty, of our identity"

is “what lies beneath” (p. 230) western liberal constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects, Manderson (2011) conceives of the problem in a manner that closely corresponds with Smith and Berg’s (1997) notion of stuckness and its drivers.

The way that Stein (1990) and Cohen (2000) conceive of this problem likewise corresponds with the notion of stuckness. Stein (1990) connects the practice of constructing illicit drug use and drug-using subjects in terms of marked otherness to an unconscious need to “restore...our well-being” by securing our normativity:

[T]he ‘ritual desecration’ associated with alcohol and other ‘drugs’ has both a *latent function* and underlying motivation as ‘social integration’. That is, what we rail about, treat and punish, we also *need*. With apologies to Voltaire: if poison-filled scapegoats did not exist, they would have to be invented (p. 994, emphases added).

And Cohen (2000) forms a similar argument:

The concept of addiction does a great deal for us. It re-establishes our world view. Time after time, the validity of our theories of the individual is established, with each perception of a ‘addict’ or the establishment of the ‘addictive’ power of a substance...Modern man needs the concept of addiction, and its evils, as Medieval man needed the devil or the heretic...this is why the concept of addiction in our western industrial culture is universally shared within the cultural language of the individual. It is as deeply religious as it is data proof because its function is to manage our fears about how much ‘we are in control’ (p. 597).

Thus both these authors contend that an unconscious, emotively-charged need to establish and secure the western liberal model of self or “worldview” drives the practice or “ritual” of separating out the acts and subjects of illicit drug use as deviant and disordered and therefore as entirely unlike the normative, controlled, rational and healthy self.

Importantly, in describing how this dichotomising practice “re-establishes our worldview” “time after time”, Cohen (2000) alludes to the paradoxical, counterproductive effects of this approach to “manag[ing] our fears”; as this inexplicitly conveys the unworkability of such practices in *meeting* the unconscious need to secure the normative, controlled self. Indeed, in intimating that this dichotomising, repudiating move is one that must be made “time after time”, Cohen’s (2000) description captures the fact that far from securing this self, the production of the acts and subjects of illicit drug use in terms of absolute otherness

does not permanently establish this selfhood, but rather, consistent with what Crawford (1994) sees as the outcome of such an approach to addressing this insecurity, establishes it “temporarily” (p. 1355). Critically then, it seems that such existing critique establishes further grounds for asking questions about the influence of these unconscious emotive processes on how illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are (and are not) constructed and thus about the potential for such processes to have locked us into a flawed, counterproductive way of knowing about such conduct and subjects that leaves us stuck reproducing the same inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising understandings over and over again.

Importantly, numerous critical writers have pointed out that such paradoxical, counterproductive effects are the inevitable outcome of attempts to address such insecurities in a dichotomising manner (Butler, 1993; Harding, 2007; Roberts, 2005). Collinson’s (2003) summary of Knights and Willmott’s (1989, 1990) work provides a clear overview of this:

Knights and Willmott...point to an irreducible ambiguity at the heart of identity construction...contend[ing] that individuals typically seek to deny or overcome this ambiguity through attempts to secure a stable identity...They argue that this pursuit of material and/or symbolic security through the search for a stable identity is inherently contradictory and is likely to produce unintended and counterproductive consequences. Their analyses emphasise not only the insecurities of modern identities, but also the various counterproductive outcomes of individuals’ attempts to overcome, resolve or deny this insecurity. Since in their view identity can never be fully secured or rendered entirely stable, individuals may become entrapped in an illusory goal, a ‘search for the holy grail’ of (re-) securing self as either subject or object...This preoccupation with securing clearly defined and coherent gender identities may further reinforce, rather than resolve, the very insecurity these strategies were intended to overcome (pp. 532-533).

Such thinking thus conceives of the collective and individual efforts to address this insecurity in a manner that is consonant with Smith and Berg’s (1997) understanding of what maintains stuckness. Indeed, such critical work has pointed out that the “congenitally failing” nature of “this project” of constructing self as separate from other does not promote resistance or change but rather “typically leads us only to redouble our efforts” to secure the discreteness and continuity of a particular subject position “and/or to further

berate ourselves for failing to do so” (Roberts, 2005, p. 637); arguably because it is assumed/believed (or perhaps felt, at a ‘gut’ level) that there is too much at stake to abandon such efforts. Thus, in keeping with Smith and Berg (1997), such work suggests that it is the combined effects of this threat of insecurity, and the paradoxical outcomes of the tactic we collectively and individually rely on to address this threat, that locks us into a constant cycle of “anxiously and endlessly” (Roberts, 2005, p. 637) separating, fixing, dividing, and othering.

Critically, the above thinking places importance on questioning if a powerful unconscious need to secure the self that forms the foundation of western liberal culture and government may drive the continued production of inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects. Moreover, it places importance on questioning if the practice of producing divergent and disjunctive accounts—our efforts to pin down ‘the truth’ about such conduct and subjects—may be so enduring because rather than eradicating our fears about the instability of selfhood this approach may paradoxically maintain them. Ultimately therefore, the above thinking suggests that it may be important to question if what lies at the heart of lack of meaningful change in the inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising ways that the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are constructed in western liberal culture is this threat and fear surrounding the insecurity of our ‘self’ and the move to separate, fix, divide, and other that this drives us to do. That is, it suggests that perhaps the interlocking unconscious processes of dichotomy and threat/fear pose a powerful barrier to change and thus may be what leaves us stuck adopting an approach to constructing such conduct and subjects that, in “dealing with the basics, over and over again”, is “as primitive as ever” (Marr, 2011, p. 202).

8.3.2 Limiting, paradoxical, counterproductive outcomes: The crux of it all?

To conclude this section I briefly discuss what others (Brook & Stringer, 2005; Crawford, 1994) have referred to as a cultural attachment to or preoccupation with the construction of the acts and subjects of illicit drug use as absolutely other and suggest how these could further establish the grounds for posing questions about the concept of stuckness and its application to the mess we find ourselves in. Clearly, if the construction of the drug-using other is felt—collectively, unconsciously—to be necessary for the notion of the fixed, discrete and normative self to exist, it makes sense that the production of such others is a project western liberal culture is deeply invested in. Importantly however, I argue that the notions of attachment and preoccupation point to the value of questioning how this might be accounted for in terms of stuckness – i.e., questioning if these outcomes

reflect the kind of emotional and enduring investment the limiting, paradoxical, and counterproductive effects of such a dichotomising approach are likely to produce. Indeed, given what has been discussed and proposed in relation to the stuckness that emerged in the interview data regarding the crux of this lack of change (i.e., the way that the ineffectiveness of such dichotomisations at eliminating contradiction and fear *maintained* the need to pursue further dichotomisation and thus maintained an investment in this project), perhaps asking such questions might enable us to get at the crux of the problem of a lack of change at a cultural level. Perhaps these unconscious, paradoxical outcomes similarly operate as a powerful barrier to change at a cultural level and thus offer a deeper explanation for the repeated and unchanging cultural production of inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising understandings of and approaches to the acts and subjects of illicit drug use.

For Brook and Stringer (2005), the relationship between the construction of the drug-using other and the production of the “strong, functional, well-adjusted, knowing, productive, fulfilled, ordered, law-abiding, and healthy” subject explains the “attachment to stigma as a social marker” and the “concern that drug users remain visible as users” that is apparent in prohibition rhetoric in Australia (p. 320). Similarly, Crawford (1994) writes:

Cultures continually preoccupied with policing the boundaries of legitimate selfhood become equally obsessed with persons that do not conform to the mandated categories and, in fact, develop an even transgressed boundaries. These cultures tend to develop a fear, fascination, and sense of horror of the other—a non-self who is believed to assume all of the characteristics antithetical to conventional selfhood. Howard Stein [42] argues that this culture’s preoccupation with alcoholism and the alcoholic is precisely this kind of cultural drama, the other side of a cultural immersion in control and various escapes (including alcohol) from control...Once again, projection onto an other of incompatible and denied aspects of personal experience provides the means by which group identity and cohesion are secured. *Self needs other* (p. 1359, emphasis original).

Thus, in both instances the practice of addressing the insecurity of the fixed, discrete, normative self through the construction of the deviant and disordered other is conceived of as something that is felt to be so important, so necessary, that it is not simply a *preferred* practice but rather is a practice that is *depended and fixated upon*.

As mentioned, this attachment or preoccupation is one that can be conceived of as understandable response given what (as outlined earlier) is expected to be the outcome of this practice. But perhaps it is also important to more closely consider how the paradoxical and counterproductive affective effects of such a dichotomising approach augment and maintain an emotional dependence/fixation. Indeed, perhaps it is important to ask if this practice is something western liberal culture is so pervasively and markedly attached to not despite of its ineffectiveness at addressing collective and individual fears, but because of it. As outlined in chapter seven, for participants this practice of attempting to fully separate their conduct and subjectivities from positions of deviance and disorder and fully align them with positions of neoliberal citizenship was shown to have the paradoxical effect of prompting positions of deviance and disorder turning towards them and thus of bringing their neoliberal citizenship into question, because these attempts at separation paradoxically reproduced and reactivated that which they hoped to disavow. Thus, consistent with what critical writers suggest (Butler, 1993, 1999; Collinson, 2003; Harding, 2007; Knights & Willmott, 1989; Roberts, 2005), their use of these practices was something that seemed to be augmented by the failure of this dichotomising move – as this failure was shown to *renew* their need to invest in these practices. Perhaps the apparent existence of a deep and lasting cultural investment in (or attachment to) establishing the drug-using subject as fully, irrevocably separate is best understood as an outcome of the way that such a move paradoxically reproduces and reactivates the very insecurities and fears they intend to overcome? Perhaps the deep and emotional nature of this investment does not just reflect the gravity of what's felt to be at stake, but *also* reflects the fact that each time the move to separate inevitably fails the need for such separation, fixing, and division is renewed? Thus, perhaps this attachment or preoccupation reflects just how deeply, powerfully western liberal culture finds itself “stuck in the self-referential binds of paradox” (Smith & Berg, 1997, p. 14)?

I believe that the findings of this research suggest that the answers to such questions may assist in the development of a more comprehensive understanding of how an attachment to a solution which inevitably maintains the problem may explain the absence of progress in how we understand and approach the acts and subjects of illicit drug use, in much the same way that it made such progress absent from what the participants interviewed had to say. It is for this reason that I advocate for asking such questions about the potential for the enduring mess we find ourselves in to be understood as a product of stuckness. It is possible that such questions might enable researchers to begin to more

deeply understand the processes which produce and maintain the shortcomings in how illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are understood and approached by drawing our attention to the potential role that affective processes may play in this complex problem. In particular, perhaps asking such questions about not only the paradox of dichotomising approaches but the emotionally-charged nature of western liberal culture's investment in such practices will generate a more comprehensive understanding of what limits our capacity for change – as perhaps, by making alternative responses to contradiction and insecurity too threatening to be thinkable, and by thus operating to maintain such contradictions and insecurities, it is not just the logic of dichotomy that limits us but the threat such logic establishes. Before I draw together such thinking and the findings from this research to speculate on what it might take to move on from this potential stuckness at a cultural level, I briefly revisit the reasons why changes it is so necessary for change in how the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are constructed to emerge, and discuss how the findings and the arguments above might add to this existing case for change.

8.4 Building on the case for change

As was detailed in the introduction, this research was borne out of the very clear case that already exists for advocating for change in how illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are understood and approached in western liberal culture. The findings that emerged through the textual analysis and the layered analysis of the intensive interviews propose a number of concerns that add to this case. Arguably what makes these concerns, and thus the outcomes of this research, unique is that they not only raise questions about the costs of the stigmatising and marginalising effects of such dichotomising practices for people who use illicit drugs but also about the broader costs of the limiting and paradoxical effects of a reliance on or attachment to (both individually and collectively) these practices. As discussed below, consideration of these latter impacts might prove to be a fruitful addition to existing discussions about the need to rethink the way that the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are constructed and approached. What's more, this research is unique in the way that it considers the potential parallel that may exist between the operation of these practices at both an individual and cultural level.

I begin this section with a discussion of the impacts of the stuckness that were apparent in the interview data; impacts which seemed to reproduce existing concerns and about ongoing inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising constructions and establish a case for more critical work into how individuals who use illicit drugs attempt to manage these difficulties. Further, I return to one of the key objectives of this research to consider

the issue of a lack of empathy in how the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are constructed to present a number of questions the findings raise about this absence of empathy and its dehumanising effects for people who use illicit drugs. After this, I then consider how a collective attachment to these dichotomising practices may bring into effect similar limiting and paradoxical costs at a cultural level – not just in terms of financial and social burdens, but also in terms of a collective emotional burden.

8.4.1 Individual impacts

Clearly, as I emphasise above, the findings from this research raise significant concerns about the extent to which a western liberal attachment to dichotomy appears to produce markedly inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising understandings of and approaches to the acts and subjects of illicit drug use in a repetitive and unchanging manner. Thus they raise significant concerns about the role that this attachment to dichotomy may play in perpetuating the numerous harms that the stigmatisation of such conduct and subjects has been consistently shown to produce – such as access to treatment and healthcare (Hopwood, 2007; Gray, 2010; Radcliffe & Stevens, 2008; Simmonds & Coomber, 2009; Tindal, Cook, & Foster, 2010; Treloar et al., 2004; Wolfe, 2007), retention in treatment (Brenner, W. Von Hippel, C. Von Hippel, Resnick, & Treloar, 2010), implementation of safe injecting practices (Simmonds & Coomber; Rhodes et al., 2009), economic and social participation (AVIL, 2011; Buchanan & Young, 2000; Fitzgerald et al., 2004; Wolfe, 2007), physical and mental health (Ahern, Stuber, & Galea, 2007; AVIL; Hopwood; Tindal et al.), and overall well-being (Link, Struening, Rahav, Phelan, & Nuttbrock, 1997). In addition to this, however, the findings also raise concerns about how this attachment to dichotomy may influence individual and collective efforts to address this stigma in a manner that potentially simultaneously perpetuates inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising understandings and approaches, and thus simultaneously perpetuates the harms associated with these shortcomings.

The findings from the intensive interviews suggest that the tactic of attempting to fully separate one's conduct and subjectivity from charges of otherness and fully align them with positions of neoliberal subjectivity did not enable the participants to form more adequate and less stigmatising and marginalising understandings of what they do and who they are. Rather, it left them constantly reconsidering their eligibility to be seen and treated as successful, normative citizens. It was clear that the adoption of this dichotomising tactic limited the participants to the formation of all-or-nothing constructions of their drug use and themselves, which thus meant that they were unable to construct *all* aspects of what

they do and who they are without inevitable contradictions and multiplicities (such as participating in an illegal behaviour and in the illicit drug trade, choosing not to disclose one's drug use, engaging socially taboo practices to get money or drugs, knowingly entering risky environments, prioritising pleasure over responsibility and control, etc.) resulting in them taking up positions of deviance and disorder. Ultimately therefore, the findings problematised the extent to which this less conscious way of knowing about their conduct and subjectivities left them encountering marked stigma and marginalisation and precluded them from forming constructions that adequately and non-problematically correspond with the complex, multiple realities of their drug-using practices and subjectivities. In particular, then, the findings problematised the extent to which the premise of dichotomy which undergirds the discourses of neoliberal citizenship had the effect of undermining the potential for such discourses to have normalising and empowering effects for participants.

The way that this dichotomising approach operated to maintain these problems for participants thus raises questions about the potential impacts of this practice for people who use illicit drugs more broadly. A plethora of research makes evident the value that researchers, advocates, and drug-using subjects place on this practice of disavowing charges of deviance and disorder and constructing conduct and subjectivities in terms of neoliberal citizenship (e.g., Duff, 2005; Erickson & Hathaway, 2010; Fraser, 2004; Gowan, Whetstone, & Andic, 2012; Green & Moore, 2009; Irwin & Fry, 2007; Jauffret-Roustide, 2009; Measham & Shiner, 2009; Moore & Fraser, 2006; Parker et al., 1998; Pennay, 2012; Pennay & Moore, 2010; Polcin, 2014; Rødner-Sznitzman, 2008; Tammi & Hurme, 2007). In keeping with concerns expressed elsewhere, however, this research raises concerns about the risk that this practice may paradoxically contribute to the maintenance of inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising understandings of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects and hence to the perpetuation of the stigma and exclusion experienced by people who use illicit drugs. However, in addition to this the findings raise questions about the risk that this practice may not only generate further stigma and exclusion for those individuals whose conduct and selves do not readily 'add up' to the norms and values of neoliberal citizenship, but may in fact do so for people who use illicit drugs more generally (i.e., even those whose drug-using practices, lifestyles and attributes are more readily aligned with these norms and values). Indeed, as Moore (2008) points out, one of the risks in constructing illicit drug use and drug-using subjects in terms of neoliberal subjectivity is that it does not just establish those forms of conduct and selfhood that are explicitly at odds with the values of autonomy, rationality, responsibility as unacceptable and inconsistent with such

positioning, but likewise constructs attributes such as “pleasure, desire, emotions” (p. 536) as unacceptable and incommensurate with the normative subject. This highlights the potential such an approach to addressing the longstanding stigmatisation and marginalisation of people who use illicit drugs perhaps has to paradoxically stigmatise and marginalise such individuals in a host of additional ways – ways that arguably risk stigmatising and marginalising a broader range of people.

Importantly, the findings thus raise questions about the extent to which this approach to addressing stigma and marginalisation may contribute to the harms experienced by people who use illicit drugs. Indeed, in potentially perpetuating inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising constructions of such conduct and subjects and undermining the purchase of normalised, empowered and legitimated positioning, it is possible that the use of this dichotomising tactic may perpetuate the risk of individuals encountering the multitude of harms that have been consistently shown to be the effects of stigma (mentioned above). Additionally, the findings raise questions about the potential for this approach to put people who use illicit drugs at risk of experiencing additional harms as a result of a (perhaps unconscious) reluctance to acknowledge or address aspects of their conduct that are not compatible with normative positioning. That is, it may prevent individuals from recognising and addressing certain aspects of their drug use, due to the need to protect their legitimate, valued place in the world from the threat that these behaviours will be “completely condemning”. Thus in having the potential to obscure these contradictory realities of their drug use, this approach to constructing what they do and who they are may put such individuals at risk of encountering increased drug-related harm due to a perhaps less conscious tendency to dismiss or minimise the riskier aspects of their drug use⁵.

In thinking about this potential for such dichotomising practices to bring into effect continued and perhaps also additional harms, it is also important to consider the concerns the findings raise about what might pose a powerful barrier to moving on from this approach. That is, based on what was discussed earlier in this chapter, it seems pertinent to also question if the threat of being stigmatised and marginalised in ways that equate to social death may pose a powerful barrier to the potential for people who use illicit drugs to adopt non-dichotomising approaches to constructing their conduct and subjectivities.

⁵ Importantly, such harm is not conceived of as the product of individual-determinants (i.e., as in the conscious or unconscious ‘denial’ of risk) but rather a product of the way, thanks to the logic of dichotomy, participants invested in the task of attempting to fully align their conduct and subjectivities with the successful neoliberal citizen.

Indeed, as Fotoupoulou and colleagues (2015) identified, their participants' efforts to guard against stigmatising positions and the discrimination this authorises (by limiting disclosure of their drug use and emphasising their "adherence to socially desirable roles"), were driven by this "looming social death" (p. 728). Thus, while it is often evident in research examining the effects of the stigmatising and marginalising ways in which illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are understood and approached that people who use illicit drugs are fearful of encountering such effects (e.g., Ahern et al., 2007; Conner & Rosen, 2008; Lancaster, Santana, Madden & Ritter, 2015; Simmonds & Coomber, 2009), perhaps alongside the tangible and conscious effects of being seen and treated as so markedly other, this fear concerns the way that such charges of otherness are experienced as threatening the individual's very existence as not just a normative, productive and worthy social actor, but as a person, or indeed as a human. Potentially therefore there is value in questioning if and how this less visible effect of stigma may pose a powerful barrier to the potential for such individuals to challenge their stigma and marginalisation in different ways. Does, for example, the profound nature of this threat make the possibility of adopting non-dichotomising approaches too threatening to be thinkable and therefore pose a powerful, unconscious barrier to alternative ways of knowing?

Importantly, in reflecting on how this cultural attachment to dichotomy may impact on people who use illicit drugs I now return to one of the key objectives of this research, which was to explore the issue of a lack of empathy in how the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are constructed. As I discuss below, based on findings and interpretations presented so far, it seems plausible that one of the most troubling implications of being preoccupied with a dichotomising approach to constructing the world and responding is the way that these practices necessitate and maintain constructions of the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are profoundly dehumanising.

8.4.1.1 Eliminating empathy: Perpetuating dehumanisation

Empathy is defined as the ability to "understand *and share* another person's experiences and emotions" (Merriam Webster, 2015, emphasis added). Importantly therefore, as Hodges and Klein (2001) explain, empathy involves recognising that "other people are like the self" (p. 441) and thus brings about a "blurring the line between self and other" (p. 438). It follows, therefore, that the elimination or foreclosure of what self and other share (i.e., the elimination of empathy) could be said to be the very purpose of the practice of separating and fixing difference. Indeed, Johnson (2005) argues that "a key feature of influential, socially conservative, political narratives on issues as disparate as

race, sexuality, and class is precisely that they tend to foreclose the possibility of feeling empathy for the ‘other’” (p. 56). She sees such narratives as designed to enable us to collectively ignore or dismiss “the grounds for empathising with” those behaviours, individuals, or groups which “disrupt” the dominant narrative of the cohesiveness and “goodness” of the western liberal subject (Johnson, 2005, p. 42), because the establishment and maintenance of our “privileged identity narrative” as “the universal, true narrative” of selfhood relies on the dismissal of such grounds (p. 56). Similarly, Shaprio (2008) sees the construction of the other as founded on the expectation that “to allow permeability in any form, including acknowledgment of shared vulnerability and suffering, is menacing because it leads to a destabilization of the healthy self” (p. 3); an expectation which thus drives us to actively disallow the possibility of any permeability (i.e., of any empathy). Hence, Shildrick (2000) notes that “even when at best there may be compassion and an attempt at empathy with the corporeally deviant” such encounters are “clearly not about opening oneself—becoming vulnerable... but precisely on forestalling such a move” (p. 220). Thus, in constituting the kind of encounter which presses on and brings into question a fixed, discrete and normative self (Crawford, 1994) empathy is the very kind of encounter that the practice of separating out and fixing the other is designed to protect against.

What such work contends therefore is that the absence of empathy in how illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are understood and approached may be a product of the fact that the project of securing the fixed, discrete, normative self relies on it. For to allow any encounters with empathy (i.e., to acknowledge the shared experiences between ‘us’ and ‘them’) would undermine the purpose that arguably lies at the heart of how such conduct and subjects are constructed (i.e., the establishment of a fixed distinction between self and other). Critically therefore, if western liberal culture is stuck investing in this “congenitally failing” (Roberts, 2005, p. 637) project of constructing illicit drug use and drug-using subjects in terms of absolute deviance and disorder in order to address recurring fears about the insecurity of the fixed, discrete self, as was hypothesised earlier, then perhaps this can explain the pervasive absence of empathy in how such conduct and subjects are understood and approached.

Indeed, this process offers a potential explanation for the particularly dehumanising constructions of the drug-using subject that were shown to occur in some of the texts analysed in the contextual analysis. As discussed in chapter three, the most striking finding that emerged in the analysis of this data was the way that the discourses of individual choice and responsibility were used in some texts to construct a young woman,

who died at a music festival after taking ecstasy, as undeserving of empathic regard. Indeed, these constructions were shown to result in the preclusion of this woman's right to human regard. This finding thus provided a particularly moving example of the profoundly dehumanising effects that constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects can have. What emerges from the above thinking is the possibility that such harmful outcomes may be the product of individual and collective efforts to eliminate encounters which press on and bring into question the boundaries of the fixed, discrete self (i.e., to foreclose the grounds for empathy). Indeed, in drawing on the above thinking, it is possible to envisage how such a blatant and pervasive lack of empathy could be explained by the paradoxical and affective effects of such dichotomous logic – by the way that our fear of such shared experiences leaves us anxiously preoccupied with the task of eliminating the grounds for such empathy. That is, it's possible to envisage that this may be precisely why the need to eliminate even the common ground of humanness exists, because each time we individually and/or collectively attempt to eliminate such grounds they “turn towards us” (Grimes, 1998, cited in Shildrick, 2000, p. 216) and thus simultaneously renew the threat of these shared experiences and our fear of what these mean for the fixed, discrete self (such as the healthy, controlled, normative self). Thus the findings suggest perhaps, by fostering a continually-renewed investment in the drug-using subject being seen and treated in ways that deny their very humanness, one of the greatest impacts this dichotomising approach has for people who use illicit drugs may be the perpetuation of their experiences of dehumanisation and thus of the marked and pervasive discrimination that such positioning legitimates (Fitzgerald et al., 2004; Fraser & Moore, 2008; Keane, 2003; Rance et al., 2012; Rance & Treloar, 2015; UKDPC, 2012; Williamson, Thom, Stimson, & Uhl, 2015; Wolfe, 2007).

Importantly, the findings also raise questions about the potential impact this dichotomising approach might have on the capacity for people who use illicit drugs to *have empathy for themselves*. Indeed, examination of the stuckness that emerged in the interview data showed how the application of dichotomous logic made those attributes of the participants' conduct and subjectivities which do not add up to the norms and values of neoliberal citizenship something they saw as “completely condemning” (Lucy). Thus, rather than being accepting of these contradictory aspects of what they do and who they are (i.e., rather than tolerating and allowing grounds for empathy), the participants worked to make them absent by establishing that these do not constitute ‘the truth’ about their conduct and subjectivities. Perhaps therefore one of the key limitations this dichotomising approach

brought into effect for participants was to make it too threatening to respond to those attributes, experiences, positions which they inevitably share with the less controlled, less responsible, less productive subject with understanding and tolerance rather than constantly fearing and repudiating them. Perhaps therefore, further examination of the impacts of this dichotomising approach might generate a deeper understanding of how self- or internalised- stigma (Corrigan & Watson, 2002; Luoma, Kohlenberg, Hayes, Bunting, & Rye, 2008; Parker & Aggleton, 2003; Radcliffe & Stevens, 2008) works. Indeed, as this kind of “felt” stigma (Lloyd, 2013, p. 86) “has material effects in the daily lives of people who use drugs, and can affect the way an individual sees themselves and the world around them” (Lancaster, Santana, Madden, & Ritter, 2015, p. 2), such questions about what might stand in the way of bringing about change in these harmful experiences for people who use illicit drugs are long overdue.

8.4.2 Cultural impacts

In raising questions about how an understanding of the stuckness that emerged in what the participants had to say might help explain the mess we find ourselves in when it comes to understanding and approaching illicit drug use and drug-using subjects in western liberal culture, the findings from this research suggest that it might be valuable to more closely consider the costs of dichotomising practices not just for people who use illicit drugs but more broadly. Existing critique of the impacts of these dichotomising practices has predominantly focused only on the more obvious (and harmful and costly) impacts, such as policy, laws, public attitudes, treatment, service delivery, etc. (Bell & Salmon, 2008; Fraser & Moore, 2008; Fraser & Treloar, 2006; Lancaster, Seear & Treloar, 2015; Radcliffe & Stevens, 2008; Sedgewick, 1994; Seear & Fraser, 2010a; valentine & Fraser, 2009). Importantly however, it seems that this emphasis has not translated into significant change. Perhaps therefore it’s time to start also considering the less obvious impacts of dichotomising practices, as perhaps it is by adding such concerns into discussions about the need for change that the case and impetus for it may be strengthened. Before discussing this however, I briefly consider the more obvious limitations these dichotomising practices pose at a cultural level.

Arguably, the most obvious limitation that can perhaps be accounted for as in part a consequence of an investment in dichotomising practices when constructing the acts and subjects of illicit drug use is the continued political, financial and social investment in an unwinnable war. Despite the fact that “these days hardly a week passes without a police chief, senior politician or judge announcing (Transform Drug Policy Foundation, 2011) that

the War on Drugs has failed dismally and that further attempts to achieve success are futile” (Wodak, 2012, p. 22), “the realities of prohibition are not seriously discussed and the major harms that result from this failed policy are not being addressed” (Douglas, Wodak, & McDonald, 2012, p. 15; see also Khenti, 2014; Williamson et al., 2015). Thus, although critics and advocates have been pointing out this failure of this war on drugs and its policies for a very long time, we do not seem to have progressed dramatically when it comes to addressing this costly and harmful problem. Indeed, despite the fact that “official, consistent and clear evidence of the failure of the policies” has been available for 25 years or more (Mugford, 1991, p. 402), moves to rectify this pronounced and pervasive problem continue to be stymied.

Perhaps a plausible explanation for this state of affairs can be found in the questions presented throughout this chapter about dichotomy and stuckness. Indeed, perhaps an inability to engage in productive discussion about and thus to effectively address the counterproductive effects of drug laws and policies could be understood as one of the most explicit and significant collective impacts of an attachment to dichotomy. Indeed, when discussing the plan for an international drug reform summit, Australian Greens Party Senator Richard Di Natale recently noted that:

One of the issues to be examined is the economics of combating drug use. Senator Di Natale cites figures from 2009/10, when Australian governments spent \$1.7 billion tackling the issue. Three times as much was spend on law enforcement than on treatment. ‘It is a very economically irrational approach at the moment,’ he says. I understand how difficult the topic is, I absolutely understand the significant harms associated with the abuse of some of these substances, but my concern is we're not responding in a way that minimises the harms ... in fact, sometimes I'm concerned what we're doing is just creating harm (Morton, 2015).

Perhaps therefore this interminable investment in an approach that is not only ineffective but which counterproductively produces increased harm as well as increased social and financial burden is one of the most obvious and significant impacts of this stuckness western liberal culture potentially finds itself in. However, are the costs of this attachment limited these more tangible domains? Is it possible that the burden maintained by this attachment to dichotomy extends beyond the above domains? Does, for example, this attachment and its paradoxical effects perhaps also come with affective costs? And is there perhaps something to be gained from considering these less conscious, less tangible

impacts alongside those most obvious and costly impacts of increased social and financial burden and increased harm?

According to Manderson (2005, 2011), the above counterproductive outcomes of a dichotomising approach to constructing illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are not an undesirable outcome for western liberal culture but rather are precisely what is hoped to come out of such laws and policies. That is, he argues that the point of constructing drug-using subjects as absolutely other is to *create and maintain, not fix*, the 'problem' of illicit drug use. Thus, he sees the ongoing failure of the war on drugs as a reflection of the success of this approach rather than its failure, as it is effective at maintaining the cultural "drama" in/through which the drug-using other serves to provide us with a constantly-renewed sense of (Manderson, 2011, p. 231). In keeping with this, the poststructuralist emphasis on the impermanency of all constructions and positions (as they can never be fixed but rather are remade in each interaction – Fraser, 2010; Mol, 1999) would likewise suggest that the fact that dichotomising practices result in the continued re-establishment of the fixed, discrete 'self' renders this approach a success rather than a failure.

What if we consider the *affective objective* of this project? As I have outlined throughout this chapter, in drawing on an understanding of the stuckness that emerged in how the participants could and could not construct their conduct and subjectivities, this research poses questions about the possibility that a similar process of stuckness characterises how such conduct and subjects are and are not constructed at a cultural level. As discussed, a range of critical works suggests that it may be the affect-driven motivation to eliminate contradiction which lies at the heart of this stuckness - i.e., which lies at the heart of this project of establishing the drug-using subject as entirely other. Importantly, such work also suggests that this project does not, in fact, achieve this desired outcome of eliminating contradiction. Indeed, critical theory tells us that although this outcome is temporarily achieved over and over again, the kind of permanent security that we hope will come out of this tactic can inevitably never be attained (Harding, 2007; Roberts, 2005). Such thinking thus raises questions about whether this practice of separating out and fixing certain behaviours, attributes and subjects does in fact fulfil its less conscious, emotive objectives or whether instead it paradoxically produces and maintains undesirable effects.

Crawford (1994) makes the point that the process of othering not only costs those who are othered but potentially also costs those that deploy this defensive manoeuvre:

Mosse, Volkan, Gilman and others have written about the dynamics of projection by which the other is imagined and distanced from the self [29]. The social and personal costs of this tactic in terms of stigmatisation of scapegoated individuals and groups as well as its utility for providing rationales for their subordination are relatively well known [30]. Less apparent are the costs to individuals who employ such defences: repression, fear and anxiety, self-hatred and a refusal to be open to potentially valuable experience (p. 1355).

The hypotheses this research has generated about the possible stuckness western liberal culture confronts suggests that such collective experiences of “fear and anxiety, self-hatred, and a refusal to be open to potentially valuable experience” may be some of the less explicit, more unsettling costs that arise out a collective investment in this tactic or defence. Indeed, what has been discussed about the paradoxical effects of this preoccupation with the construction of the drug-using other suggests that, far from providing the desired sense of security, this tactic is instead likely to result in us (as individuals and as a culture) “inevitably find[ing] ourselves wanting” (Keane, 2000, p. 342). That is, it seems that when it comes to the unconscious affect that drives it, this approach may be deeply unsatisfying and problematic, as it cannot effectively address fears about insecurity but rather renders these fears constantly active and hence leaves us stuck (individually and collectively) having to constantly manage them. In other words, if the move to construct the drug-using subject as entirely other is understood to paradoxically reproduce the insecurity and fear that it was intended to overcome, this suggests that the impact of our attachment to such practices is not a collective sense of confidence but rather a recurring sense of insecurity and fear. This suggests, then, that the move to foreclose any grounds for empathising with the acts and subjects of illicit drug use can only ever have the paradoxical effect of reminding us of our own experiences of diminished autonomy, our own decisions to prioritise pleasure over health or suspended control over self-discipline, and so forth. Perhaps therefore, another key impact of this attachment to dichotomy is the “refusal to be open to [the] potentially valuable experience” of accepting and tolerating such contradictions and multiplicities because the fear that they will disrupt the possibility of the fixed, discrete, cohesive self once and for all remains so active and so powerful.

It thus seems valuable to begin examining if a cultural attachment to dichotomy does indeed produce these unwanted affective outcomes, as an understanding of these impacts may have the potential to offer a deeper understanding of why the same

problematic moves continue to be made over and over again. Critically therefore the thinking outlined throughout this chapter suggests that the ultimate impact of this attachment to dichotomy may be the way that it prevents the capacity for western liberal culture to move from the incessant, unsatisfying project of drawing lines in the sand. I wonder, therefore, if the pursuit of such thinking might make visible particular, deeply-obscured costs that can offer some new and potentially more powerful leverage into the existing case for change. Indeed, it seems plausible that the pursuit of such thinking could deepen and augment the argument that such practices constitute a poor and limited solution by foregrounding how this approach to constructing the world prevents the capacity to learn to tolerate and live with contradictions and multiplicities (i.e., limits our capacity to construct what we do and who we are in more satisfying ways), and ultimately, in maintaining an incessant need to be rid of such inevitable disruptions, leaves western liberal culture stuck ruled by fear.

In questioning the potential for this attachment to dichotomy to produce these unwanted affective impacts therefore the findings from this research call for critical research which brings to the fore these less conscious, less rational processes to examine if and how the unworkability of this approach to making sense of the world may generate undesirable outcomes not just for people who use illicit drugs, but *for everyone*. Such exploration of the less obvious impacts of the current approach to constructing illicit drug use and drug-using subjects may constitute valuable additions to the existing case for change, and may indeed constitute the kind of additions that are needed in order to generate sufficient impetus to begin looking for alternative, more satisfactory solutions. Indeed, perhaps this is what it will take for western liberal culture to give up on the ineffective and counterproductive tactics of waging an unwinnable war and producing a wide range of acts and subjects in inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising terms. It is such questions about what change will take that I present in the concluding section of this chapter, where I discuss what the findings from this research and the hypotheses they generate propose to be alternatives to this mess.

8.5 Proposing a broader deconstructive approach in the search for change

Throughout western liberal history there has been little change in the extent to which the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are constructed as other. With each ostensible development in how such conduct and subjects are constructed in western liberal culture, therefore, rather than the development of alternative understandings and approaches, we have instead seen the same problem of divergence, disjuncture, stigma and marginalisation

reproduced time and time again. Through this research I thus aimed to explore this mess of divergence and disjuncture from the perspective of a small group of people who use illicit drugs, in order to generate questions about potential ways to produce more adequate, less stigmatising and marginalising understandings and approaches. Importantly, what emerged through the analyses of these interviews were questions about what may explain this problem of a lack of meaningful change in how the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are understood and approached. As has been detailed throughout this final chapter, in drawing together the findings from both analyses and existing critical work, I have proposed how Smith and Berg's (1997) concept of stuckness may assist in developing a better understanding of why we find ourselves facing the same problematic understandings over and over again, and in doing so may assist in developing a better understanding of how to overcome this lack of change and address the mess we find ourselves in. In keeping with the final task CLA, that of reconstruction, this section is dedicated to exploration of that final point; outlining what the application of this concept of stuckness to the mess we find ourselves in proposes as possible steps forward. I thus present here the three key proposals that have emerged out of the exploratory examination of this mess.

Specifically, I discuss how these findings complement existing critical work which calls for the unsettling of the logic of dichotomy and the adoption of a model of multiplicity—not just when constructing the acts and subjects of illicit drug use, but when constructing western liberal culture and its subjects more broadly. Secondly, and more importantly, I pose questions about the possibility that these efforts to disrupt this attachment to dichotomy may require a broadened deconstructive stance; one which examines the potential role of affect in not only driving this attachment to dichotomy, but in operating as a barrier to addressing this attachment. Finally, I pose questions about how, through making visible the affective processes which may be central to the ongoing stuckness and mess we face, a broadened deconstructive approach could establish the grounds for introducing empathy into the way that the acts and subjects of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are understood and approached in western liberal culture. In summing the overall research findings and interpretations, therefore, this section outlines the key research outcome: the grounds for asking further questions about, and engaging in deeper deconstruction of, the range of less conscious practices which may underpin and maintain the mess we find ourselves in.

8.5.1 Unsettling dichotomy: Living with multiplicity

Smith and Berg (1997) assert that “movement results from living within the paradox” (p. 215). What they contend to be the key to addressing stuckness therefore is the capacity unsettle the group’s attachment to dichotomy. The argument they make for change is thus one that is in keeping with a poststructuralist stance, which likewise sees a move away from the limits of dichotomy—a letting go of “nineteenth-century preoccupations: with fixing, with demarcating, with separating” (Law & Urry, 2004, p. 403)—as central to unseating numerous hegemonic arrangements of knowledge/power in western liberal culture (Atkinson, 2001; Butler, 1993, 1999; Stephenson, 2003). What’s more, this capacity to accept that “multiplicity” is not “unique” but “rather is the ‘ordinary lot’ of things” (Fraser & Moore, 2008, p. 750, citing Serres, 1998) has been often cited by critical researchers as what’s required to generate more adequate, less stigmatising and marginalising understandings of and approaches to illicit drug use and drug-using subjects. Indeed, it seems likely that it is only through learning to live with the fact that the world and subjects are made up or assembled (Duff, 2015) in multiple ways that we will find less problematic ways to, as Gossop (2013) implores us to, learn to live with drugs.

As previously mentioned, Fraser and Moore (2008) see this opening up “of a space in/through which non-binarising, nonordering, non-normalising conceptions of illicit drug use and its problems can be generated” (p. 749) as central to the project of bringing about change in the inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising ways that the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are constructed in policy and practice. Indeed, Seear and Fraser’s (2010a) analysis of the way the discourses of voluntariness and compulsion constructed a prominent West Australian footballer and his use of illicit drugs emphasises that “the normative fantasy of compulsivity and voluntariness as mutually exclusive” poses a barrier to the capacity for such individuals to develop ways of understanding and responding to their drug use and themselves that are not fraught by the inadequacy and stigma that are the inevitable outcomes of this dichotomising or polarising framework (p. 448). They thus argue that such polarisations in how the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are constructed are “problematic and unsustainable” and, through their inability to adequately capture the complex ways in which such conduct and subjects occur (such as the way that both compulsion and volition can operate in unison), produce stigmatising and marginalising effects such a sense of inauthenticity and illegitimacy for such individuals (Seear & Fraser, 2010a, p. 449). Importantly therefore, numerous researchers have emphasised the need to disrupt these dichotomising assumptions and practices in order to address the

shortcomings in how illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are constructed (Bell & Salmon, 2008; Fraser, 2010a; Moore, 2008; Seear & Fraser, 2010a). Indeed, according to Wolfe (2007), this unsettling of dichotomy and the corresponding opening up of the capacity for people who use illicit drugs to be multiply located in competing subject positions is what “resurrecting IDUs from the category of socially dead will likely require” (p. 251).

Critically, some researchers envisage that it is in/through the adoption of a poststructuralist configuration of subjectivity that the acts and subjects of illicit drug use can be constructed in more adequate ways (Duff, 2012; Fraser, 2004; Fraser & Moore, 2008; Huges, 2007; Keane, 2003). As Moore and Fraser (2006) describe:

In place of the liberal subject central to modernity, poststructuralist theory poses a ‘multiple’, ‘fragmented’ or ‘dispersed’ subject with no essential core. This subject is always ‘becoming’, always in the process of construction, rather than having a fixed identity that endures unchanged over time. It is constructed by, and not merely reflected in, discourses and signifying practices. In this view, the subject is inherently relational and has no meaningful independent existence outside these relationships—it is ‘saturated’ (Gergen, 1991) or ‘protean’ (Lifton, 1993) (p. 3042).

This poststructuralist stance thus makes it possible to promote a different, non-dichotomising way of positioning the inevitable disruptions in one’s autonomy, responsibility, rationality, and so forth that occur in the context of the complex, multiple realities in which the acts and subjects of illicit drug use unfold. Indeed, it enables these disruptions or contradictions to be understood as reflective and productive of the subjectivity or subjectivities that are constructed in that moment of interaction, rather than reflective and productive of a fixed, discrete, internal identity. This approach thus makes it possible for all aspects of conduct and subjectivity to be accounted for without inevitable contradictions and multiplicities threatening or bringing into effect marked stigma and exclusion.

Importantly therefore, this capacity to decentre the expectation that legitimate subjects must be fixed, discrete, cohesive may rectify the current tendency for illicit drug use and drug-using subjects to be constructed in terms of “half-truths” – where risky or socially unsanctioned aspects of such conduct and subjectivities are seen as definitive of all drug users, all of the time rather than as only somewhat true, for some people, some of the time (Fitzgerald, 2015). It would thus open up the scope for developing understandings and approaches that are more in keeping with the complex, multiple, and competing realities of such conduct and subjectivities and thus which rather than producing counterproductive

outcomes may more effectively address the wide range of different needs that people who use illicit drugs experience. What's more, this would arguably open up the scope for such individuals to form dramatically different understandings of and approaches to their conduct and subjectivities. Arguably, opening up to paradox and multiplicity would have made it possible for the participants interviewed to be able to construct their conduct and subjectivities in ways that adequately capture *all* aspects of what they do and who they are, without anticipating that that some of these would have dramatically stigmatising and marginalising implications; as Abby commented towards the end of her interview, it would mean "allowing the conversation to incorporate both, instead of excluding that side, or extending that side". In enabling these discourses to be drawn upon in a manner which does not rely on the reproduction of further stigma and marginalisation and which does not rely on the establishment of absolute coherence, this acceptance of contradiction would thus have potentially made it possible for participants to take up positions of legitimacy and inclusion without those aspects of their conduct and subjectivities which disrupt their autonomy, responsibility, productivity, etc. undermining such positioning. Potentially therefore, this capacity to unsettle the attachment to dichotomy and live with contradiction could make it possible for the discourses of choice, responsibility, productivity, health, and so forth to be drawn upon in a manner that generates a more lasting sense of inclusion and legitimacy for people who use illicit drugs.

Critically however, Moore and Fraser (2006) note that this poststructuralist approach has "potential disadvantages", as:

such definitions of the subject as fragmentary, non-rational, always in a state of flux, may be applied only to social groups that are already deeply marginalised, rather than to all subjects, including the most 'respectable'. This would likely reinforce popular prejudice and stigmatisation and may further entrench discrimination in legal, employment, health and welfare contexts (p. 3042).

They stress therefore the importance of recognising that:

when poststructuralist theory is brought to bear on the question of the neo-liberal subject, the intention is in part to question the extent to which any of us—drug users, politicians, academics, that is, all human beings—manage to approximate the neo-liberal ideal (p. 3045).

What this move gets at therefore is how dichotomy can be unsettled altogether by making visible the extent to which all of us can never be seen as fully, fixedly autonomous, responsible, rational, etc. (i.e., as a full, fixed normative subject) as we are all always being constructed and reconstructed (or assembled) in interaction with the various social, discursive, material, affective forces we encounter (Duff, 2015). Thus, such theory tells us that perhaps to be effective at addressing the deeply inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising constructions that arise out of our attachment to dichotomy, what is needed is not so much a change in how we construct the acts and subjects of illicit drug use but rather a change in how we construct the normative subject. Indeed, Moore and Fraser (2006) conclude that such “critique of the neoliberal subject in general, rather than on the ability of one group in particular to enact it” is the “kind of approach [that] appears to offer scope both for scepticism towards the liberal subject and acknowledgement of its strategic value” (p. 3044). Thus, had such an approach been available to participants perhaps it would have enabled them to construct their conduct and subjectivities in normalising and empowering terms without the expectation that such normative, legitimate positioning must be full, total, uninterrupted for it to be ‘true’. Indeed, perhaps it would have enabled them to accept and account for the fact that there are multiple truths about what they do and who they are – some complementary, some competing, some overlapping, but none of which can legitimise the right to see and treat them as non-citizens or indeed as non-people.

It is imperative, however, to acknowledge that in proposing for this decentring of “the neoliberal subject altogether, *not solely for drug users but for all*” (Moore & Fraser, 2006, p. 3041, emphasis original), what is being called for is exactly what, as discussed earlier, inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects arguably aim to prevent – the collapse of the liberal self. Indeed, this poststructuralist move is not limited to the project of learning to live with the contradictions in ‘others’ and in the world, but involves learning to live (individually and collectively) with *our own* contradictions and multiplicities. It thus forces us as individuals and as a culture to confront the interminable insecurity, indeed the utter “fantasy” (Seear & Fraser, 2010a, p. 442; see also Beech, 2011; Harding, 2007; Lacan, 1979), of this fixed, discrete, cohesive self. Ultimately therefore, it is predicated upon adopting a different approach to fears – one in which they can be confronted rather than met with attempts to eliminate them.

Critically, Smith and Berg's (1997) conceptualisation of the stuckness emphasises that this kind of emotional shift is precisely what is needed if a group is to become capable of "living within paradox" (p. 215). Indeed, they stress that because a group's experience of a powerful, unconscious fear about the implications of contradiction that lies at the heart of stuckness, this capacity to live with paradox or contradiction can only occur when a group is able to "go toward, rather than away from, the anxiety or fear" associated with such contradictions (Smith & Berg, 1997, p. 222). Thus, in proposing the need to learn to live with contradiction and paradox, this understanding of stuckness and its drivers suggests that it is necessary to simultaneously propose the need to adopt a different approach to these unconscious fears and insecurities. Specifically, this understanding of stuckness suggests that in order to learn to live with contradiction and paradox we first need to override the unthinking propensity to attempt to eliminate these fears by making them visible and known. Indeed, it seems that what might be needed are efforts to foreground rather than eliminate disruptions in the performance of the fully autonomous, rational, enterprising subject that all members of western liberal culture inevitably encounter, so that our individual and collective fears about the meaning of these disruptions (i.e., the fear that such disruptions mean a loss of all legitimacy – individually and collectively) can be examined and addressed. Thus, as is argued below, the findings from this research extend on existing calls for an unsettling of dichotomy, an opening up of multiplicities, and a decentring of the neoliberal subject (see Fraser, 2015; Fraser & Moore, 2008; Moore & Fraser, 2006; Seear & Fraser, 2010a) by proposing that for such deconstructive moves to be effective perhaps they need to simultaneously disrupt the role of the unconscious affective forces that may drive an individual and collective attachment to such dichotomy.

8.5.2 Broadening deconstruction through foregrounding fear

In their complex, Deleuzian analysis of the way that encounters with illicit drug use disrupt normative, valued boundaries, such as those between bodies, environments, materials, etc., Fitzgerald and Threadgold (2004) make the point that fears about being unable to "think of ourselves as sovereign individuals with our own subjectivity, identity and body" (p. 409) are central to how such conduct and subjectivities are constructed. Critically, they argue that "rather than continually attempting to displace and destroy it" we should "foreground" and "learn from" such fear (Fitzgerald & Threadgold, 2004, p. 417). The argument they make is thus the same as that asserted by Smith and Berg (2007), who stress that it is only by acknowledging and approaching our fears that movement and progress becomes possible. In much the same way as numerous psychological therapeutic

approaches therefore (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999; Foa & Kosack, 1986; Linehan, 1993), such critical work pairs the capacity for change with foregrounding, processing, tolerating, and learning from that which makes us uncomfortable. It is proposed in this section, therefore, that in attempting to make visible and disrupt the dichotomisations which underpin problematic understandings of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects, perhaps we need to broaden this to include exploration of how to make visible and disrupt our collective and individual responses to such fear.

Importantly, in developing their argument for foregrounding and learning from fear Fitzgerald and Threadgold (2004) make the point that “where emotion and affect dominates, there is often little room for rational argument” (p. 408). This is a point that others make also; noting that, when it comes to “debate about how we address the challenges of mind-altering drugs” there is “an added emotional and moral aspect that is not seen in most other policy areas” (UKDPC, 2012, p. 8), that “the intensity of the drug debate appears to be more a result of the emotion that surrounds drug use than of any deep moral differences” (Bush & Neutze, 2000, p. 142), and that because discussion and policy relating to illicit drug use is “driven by” “highly emotional arguments” (Tiberghien & Decorte, 2013, p. 247), it is a matter that is “unlikely to be dealt with simply as a matter of purely technocratic, evidence-based, scientific discourse” (MacGregor, 2013, p. 226; see also Polcin, 2014). Directly and indirectly therefore there already exists a sentiment of concern regarding the role that such affect plays in posing a barrier to the development of adequate understandings of and approaches to illicit drug use in western liberal culture. The findings from this research thus expand on this sentiment; forming the basis for asking more in-depth questions about the role of threat and fear in establishing and maintaining an unworkable investment in establishing ‘the truth’ about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects. Indeed, the findings propose that perhaps it is only through efforts to broaden our deconstructive work to include exploration (or foregrounding) of such affect that changes in the stuckness that characterises this interminable debate, or mess, and its longstanding harmful outcomes may emerge.

This argument is one that shares similarities with Manderson’s (2005, 2011) critique of western liberal drug laws, in which he stresses the importance of bringing unconscious affective processes to the fore, so that their influence can be made known and learned from. He contends that changes in illicit drug policy cannot occur as long as we continue to ignore the fact that such understandings and approaches are “not related to

reason” but rather are shaped by the “irrational impulse” (p. 227) to shore up the belief system that is so vital to us. As he puts it:

When our friends and family behave irrationally, indulging in fears and behaviours that even they agree are dysfunctional, eventually we stop reasoning with them and send them to an analyst instead. It is their irrational impulses that need to be understood if they are to change. After 50 years of prohibition, we know that banning heroin has not worked. Yet, still we persist. The question is why. It is time to psychoanalyse our drug policies, searching for the irrational fears and anxieties that lie at its heart (Manderson, 2005, p. 36).

Manderson (2005) thus argues that western liberal culture’s unconscious preoccupation with establishing such conduct and subjects as other can only be unsettled if we make visible and understand the extent to which it is driven by “irrational fears and anxieties”. His argument however is limited to the way that the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are constructed in western liberal drug laws. Extending on this, the findings from this research posit a broader argument regarding the role that these unconscious affective forces play in driving and maintaining constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects. I thus argue for a broadening of Manderson’s (2005, 2011) call for these fears and anxieties to be made visible. Specifically, I question if in attempting to disrupt the dichotomisations that underpin western liberal culture’s inadequate constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects perhaps we need to not only concentrate on decentring the unseen and unchallenged knowledge practices which undergird neoliberal (Moore & Fraser, 2006) and uni-dimensional (Seear & Fraser, 2010a) accounts of conduct and subjects, but to also deconstruct the unseen and unchallenged affective forces which may also play a key role in the production of these stigmatising and marginalising understandings. Indeed, in suggesting that Smith and Berg’s (1997) notion of stuckness may explain why western liberal culture continues to produce the same flawed understandings of illicit drug use over and over again, the analysis conducted here raises questions about the value of drawing linkages between the work of scholars such as Fraser (Fraser, 2015; Fraser & Moore, 2008; Moore & Fraser, 2006; Seear & Fraser, 2010a), Fitzgerald and Threadgold (2004), and Manderson (2005; 2011). That is, it suggests that perhaps this move to introduce aspects of psychoanalytic thinking into poststructuralist accounts of illicit drug use, as is called for in the methodology of CLA (Inayatullah, 1998; 2004) and by Manderson (2005; 2011), thereby broadening our deconstructive work to include the role of affect, may constitute a more

comprehensive platform from which to address the mess we find ourselves in and the stuckness that seems to characterise it.

In particular, the analysis conducted here poses questions about the role that limited examination of these affective forces may play in limiting our capacity to address this mess – that is, our capacity to become unstuck from a dichotomising approach and bring about significant change in how illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are understood. That is, the findings not only propose an understanding of how, as Manderson (2005, 2011) argues, these fears and anxieties may *drive* the move to form dichotomising constructions of the acts and subjects of illicit drug use, but also speculate on how these fears and anxieties may *operate as a powerful barrier to disrupting this propensity to dichotomise* (i.e., as a barrier to addressing the mess we continue to confront). Thus the ideas I present here depart from existing critique by emphasising that perhaps efforts to disrupt uni-dimensional, dichotomous constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects (Seear & Fraser, 2010a), and to form understandings and approaches that reflect and produce the inevitable multiplicities of such conduct, subjects and of the world (Fraser & Moore, 2008; Fraser, 2015), cannot succeed so long as this unconscious affective barrier remains unexamined. The questions I believe the research findings pose therefore concern the need for an expanded, broadened approach to deconstructing the *range* of unconscious practices underpinning the mess of divergent and disjunctive constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects; one which examines the potential affective forces that operate alongside the unseen, unchallenged logic of dichotomy.

The ideas that emerged through the in-depth analysis of the participants' stuckness—their inability to move away from such dichotomisations—thus constitute a substantive contribution to the basis for asking questions about unconscious and emotive processes and the role they may play in maintaining an attachment to problematic, stigmatising ways of knowing about illicit drug use and drug-using subjects. Such ideas suggest that perhaps through critical examination of the individual and collective fears surrounding interruptions in the performance of autonomy, rationality, enterprising selfhood, and so forth it may become possible to envisage ways to disrupt the powerful cultural preoccupation with eliminating contradiction, paradox, multiplicity and so forth. They suggest that perhaps such examinations may generate understandings of how to foster the potential as a culture to see that the inevitable contradictions in our conduct and selves do not constitute a threatening 'problem' that must be 'solved' but rather simply constitute "the 'ordinary lot' of things" (Serres, 1998, cited in Fraser & Moore, 2008, p.

749). Indeed, if it is such unconscious fear which produces and maintains our anxiety-ridden, “congenitally failing” (Roberts, 2005, p. 637) investment in the project of establishing ‘the truth’, then perhaps by making such fear and the threat that drives/maintains it visible and known it may become possible for alternatives to this counterproductive, futile approach to emerge. The findings from this research thus raise new questions about the potential for broadening of our analyses to include consideration of affective forces, in the hope that they may lead to the development of more comprehensive understandings of why these inadequate constructions of such conduct and subjects remain so unchanged.

It was very clear in what the participants articulated that they saw the tactic of aligning their conduct and subjectivities with the norms and values of neoliberal citizenship as a valuable and appropriate approach to contesting automatic and structured charges of deviance and disorder. However it was also clear in what they voiced (and in did not voice) that, in precluding the room to make sense of all aspects of what they do and who they are without these complexities being “completely condemning”, and in tying them to a practice which reproduced the drug-using subject who is absolutely other, this approach did not contest these stigmatising and marginalising constructions but instead maintained them. The findings thus exemplified the concerns expressed by Moore and Fraser (2006) about this approach to change. Drawing on Sedgwick (1994), they emphasise that “while strategic alignment with neo-liberalism and its valorisation of autonomy and free will promises political benefits for drug users, it also promises undesired political effects”, such as the perpetuation and proliferation of the compulsive drug-using, as it is this very construct which is the “counterstructure” through which the autonomous neoliberal citizen is made real (p. 3045). Perhaps therefore, foregrounding the affect that drives and maintains western liberal culture’s attachment to establishing ‘the truth’ would make it possible to access and develop strategies for addressing these charges of deviance and disorder that move beyond this “reverse discourse tactic” (Butler, 1993, p. 19) and thus which do not replicate the same problematic outcomes.

Thus, in keeping with the work of critical researchers who draw on psychoanalytic thinking to contend that “the recognition of the role of unconscious processes at work in society can unlock the missing elements in the explanation of ethnic hatred, addressing the affect power in racism and confronting the irrational forces which inform social action” (Clarke, 1999, p. 23; see also Joffe, 1996; Jonson, 2005), what is proposed here is that perhaps an acknowledgement and understanding of these unconscious affective processes

is what has been missing from our efforts to bring about change in the inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising ways that illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are constructed. Indeed, I am reminded here of Ezzell's (2009) findings, which locate the desire for "self-worth and affirmation" as the driver for the "defensive othering" of female athletes (p. 125). Although this may seem quite obvious when talking about the individual execution of identity work, Johnson (2005) argues that our critical understandings of such othering and the stigma and marginalisation they produce would benefit from the acknowledgement that so often our constructions of the world are "motivated by the desire to feel well about ourselves" *at a collective level* (p. 57). What is proposed therefore extends on existing critique which sees an unsettling of dichotomy as necessary for meaningful change to occur by suggesting in order for this disruption of dichotomy to occur perhaps it must coincide with the move to foreground, learn from, and sit with our individual and collective fears, as perhaps foregrounding and learning from these unconscious, affective processes will unlock that which has rendered us stuck reproducing rather than addressing the mess of divergence and disjuncture that we find ourselves in.

It is important to emphasise, however, that in making this proposal I do not intend to claim that this emotional move is at odds with and thus should replace efforts that appeal to logic and reason, for that would replicate the very kind of dichotomisation that I have problematised. Rather, I hope to impress the value of speculating on benefits of *broadening* our deconstructive efforts to include the consideration of these affective processes. Schimmel (2002) argues that "in an area of law and public policy which is contentious, politically volatile and in which symbolism has achieved iconic status, what is needed is to see the situation with reason, perspective and pragmatism" (p. 154, cited in Lancaster, Seear & Treloar, 2015, p. 8). Thus perhaps it could be argued that an over-emphasis on reason has limited the ability to see the situation with perspective, by obscuring important aspects of the problem (such as affect and desire – see Johnson, 2005 for further discussion). Perhaps therefore it is through gaining greater perspective in this way that might finally begin to generate the capacity to see and approach the situation with greater pragmatism. Indeed, in his recent commentary on how to apply the Deluzian notion of "assemblage thinking in the analysis of drug problems" (p. 1), Duff (2015) reflects on the potential for an approach where such problems are understood as an assemblage made up of combined "social, affective and material forces and entities" (p. 1) to "offer a way out of interminable debates regarding the relative onus of agents and structures, individuals and contexts, in the production of drug problems" (pp. 15-16). Thus it seems that there is a

growing recognition of the need to understand that affect constitutes one of the many forces which shapes western liberal culture's production of such problems, and thus that if a "way out of interminable debates" (i.e., a way out of this mess of divergence and disjuncture) is to emerge, first, such affect and its influences must be confronted and understood.

8.5.3 Fostering grounds for empathy

In proposing an extended, more comprehensive deconstruction of the attachment to dichotomy which underpins the mess of divergence and disjuncture in how illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are constructed - one which presents the case for examining the role of affective forces alongside those historical and political forces - the above interpretations also address the other key objective of this research: to generate discussion about how to foster a sense of empathy in/through such constructions. I argue here that the findings regarding the paralysing effects of the myth of dichotomy and the fear attached to it, as well as the reflections on what it may take to move on from this stuckness, suggest that perhaps terms of sameness are not sufficient for such empathy to emerge, but rather that fostering such empathy may also require an opening up of *shared difference*. That is, the findings regarding the paradoxical effects of aligning illicit drug use and drug-using subjects with the so-called 'normative subject' suggest that perhaps it is through practices which establish what such 'normative subjects' share with the people who uses illicit drugs that such grounds for empathy will be made available. In particular, they suggest that these grounds for empathy may be found in/through a) an unsettling of the expectation that any of us—people who use illicit drugs and those who do not—can "manage to approximate the neo-liberal ideal" (Moore & Fraser, p. 3045) and b) a willingness (collectively and individually) to acknowledge those realities of what we do and who we are that elicit affective discomfort (be it fear, shame, guilt, etc.) for the disruptions they pose to our collective and individual sense of absolute autonomy, responsibility, rationality, health, productivity, and so forth.

The thoughts about how empathy might be fostered in how illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are constructed that emerge out of this research thus correspond with a theme that has emerged in the work of number of writers for over 20 years now about constructing such conduct and subjects in ways that produce them as no more or less remarkable than a host of other kinds of habits, behaviours, lives and selves (Keane, 2000; O'Malley & Mugford, 1992; valentine & Fraser, 2008; Roberts et al., 2009; Sedgewick, 1992; Seear & Fraser, 2010a). For example, in their discussion of the extent to which

constructions of deviance and disorder pathologise the acts and subjects of illicit drug in unwarranted and harmful ways, O'Malley and Mugford (1992) note that "we need a new approach, something that refers not to the unusual nature of the users, but rather to their mundaneness" (p. 6). Moreover, in their discussion of the limitations that can arise from only understanding illicit drug use in social or structural terms, valentine and Fraser (2008) note that it is important to consider the risk that such understandings can be "exceptionalising, making them a special case" and thus can replicate existing stigma and exclusion (p. 411). They thus impress that it may be more productive to show how critiques can be "extended to all citizens" (p. 411). What is tendered here is thus in keeping with these concerns; suggesting that a productive approach to promoting greater empathy may be the development of ways of constructing the acts and subjects of illicit drug use that address this propensity to make such conduct and subjects "a special case"; not by establishing an absence of difference, but rather by establishing that such difference is not quite as different as we think – that, in being something we all share, it is more ordinary or mundane than it is exceptional.

Indeed, the approach proposed here is one that forces an acknowledgement of the reality that:

Modern men and women inhabit a world where they routinely get 'high' on music, feel moved by movies, hope to improve their chances for sexual ecstasy by consuming Calvin Klein cologne or Johnny Walker scotch, and endlessly 'improve' their selves with commodities ranging from hair colouring to psychotherapy to cosmetic surgery. In such a world, the consumption of consciousness-altering commodities—drugs—is not a large leap down a dark, unknown road, but just another short step along a well-worn and familiar path (Reinarman & Levine, 1997, p. 337).

It thus offers an alternative to the move to highlight how the drug-using subject is like the 'normative' subject. Instead, it is a move which highlights how our own acts of consumption, our own desire to seek altered mental and physical states, to seek affective enhancement or containment, our own propensity to engage in certain behaviours habitually, and so forth disrupt our adherence to the ethics of autonomy, responsibility, rationality, and authenticity in ways that make 'us' and what we do are not so dissimilar from 'them' and what they do. At the very least, it highlights that those dissimilarities which do exist are far from full and absolute. It is thus about making it possible to see that those

differences that are overemphasised in constructions of illicit drug use and drug-using subjects are not exclusive to such conduct and subjectivities but are familiar and common to us all.

Clearly, the capacity to see that such multiplicities do not exclusively belong to the 'other' but rather are shared by and familiar to us all is predicated on the capacity to disrupt the dramatic, threatening all-or-nothing implications attached to those aspects of our conduct and selves which show that our autonomy and rationality is not fixed and discrete. These grounds for empathy are thus arguably predicated on the capacity to bring about the kind of deep cultural change which unsettles our attachment to dichotomy, our attachment to the fixed, discrete self, and our corresponding investment in the task of attempting to eliminate the contradictions and multiplicities that we fear. Indeed, it would seem that such changes are necessary if we are to make room for those actions which are pleasure-seeking, desire-driven, unplanned, and risky to be acknowledged without anticipating that these will be seen as reflecting an interior self that is undisciplined, irresponsible, and deviant. Ultimately therefore, it is through the kinds of change proposed above that it becomes possible to imagine how we might foster empathy in how the acts and subjects of illicit drug use are constructed, as such moves nullify the unconscious need to repeatedly repudiate and displace shared multiplicities. Indeed, it is possible to imagine how, by potentially altering those mythical, less conscious, emotive forces which currently produce and maintain our collective "determination to reinforce the line dividing (drug-using) 'them' from (abstinent) 'us'" (Brook & Stringer, 2005, p. 319) and hence diminishing the collective need for those experiences which blur the line between self and other to be responded to with the "urgent" and incessant "quest for boundary delineation" (Shapiro, 2008, p. 3), these comprehensive deconstructive moves could make it possible to foster the empathy that is currently made absent in such pronounced, pervasive and enduring ways.

In relation to gender and sexuality, Halperin (1995) emphasises that rather than working to "eliminate difference" our target for change should be to "invent ways of dealing with difference so as to guard against whatever effects it might produce that would pose obstacles" to equality (p. 85). This is precisely what is imagined here. A set of deconstructive moves, including the disruption of affective processes, which do not aim to generate empathy, inclusion and equality through the elimination of difference but instead aim to deal with this difference as something we all share rather than as something that legitimises understandings of and approaches to people who use illicit drugs that foreclose their entitlement to the same kind of citizenship—the same kind of personhood and

humanity—as the next person. Thus what is imagined here as a way forward is the kind of movement that is hoped would make it possible for people who use illicit drugs to be seen and treated as “people too” (Rance & Treloar, 2015, p. 34); to make it possible for our understandings and approaches to make matters less complicated by unsettling the production of difference and multiplicity as exceptional to show instead that it is what we are all made up of:

Drug users may be victims, perpetrators, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters. Whatever their discursive position, they, like us, are *of* the world. Drug users do different things to the majority of the population. Drug users commit crime, they inject drugs and they can hang around street corners. They also have babies, watch television, laugh, cry, wear Nike and contribute to the economy. They, like us, are of the same substance, same world. Our overriding imperative in applying Deleuze’s analysis is to encourage in the reader an encounter with the world, which brings the reader closer to the world. When we are close to the world, we care more for the world. Our compassion extends to the world when we know we are of the world (Fitzgerald & Threadgold, 2004, p. 416).

The way forward that is imagined here, then, is the capacity to see and treat the acts and subjects of illicit drug use as made up in many evolving, messy ways (some beneficial, some harmful, some both) and the capacity for each and any of these various assemblages to maintain the same right to be seen and treated as worthy and valued that is enjoyed by everyone else. Crucially then, what is imagined here is an opening up of ways of knowing in/through which the participants could have spoken about all of what they do and who they are without anticipating that some of this would undermine this right to the same citizenship and humanness as the next person. That is, an opening up of ways of knowing in/through which they could convey the message that none of what they do and experience changes the fact that they are ‘normal’ too; the message and right which participants clearly hoped aligning their conduct and subjectivities with the neoliberal subject would establish.

8.6 Conclusion: Finding change in repetition

The objectives I hoped to pursue through this research centred on a concern with the problem of a lack of change in how inadequately we understand and approach illicit drug use and in the stigmatising and marginalising outcomes these understandings and approaches produce. Although it was expected that speaking to a range of people who use

illicit drugs might generate hypotheses about how to make sense of this mess of divergent and disjunctive accounts in ways that have the potential to address this lack of change, what emerged through the layered analysis of the interview data were hypotheses about the nature, origins, and drivers of this constant reproduction of inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising accounts. Indeed, what I have done through this research is place small examples of this process of reproduction under the microscope; examining instances of lack of change, or of stuckness, that emerged in a selection of news-media texts and in interviews with people who use illicit drugs – pulling these instances apart so that their workings could be made visible. In doing so I have generated hypotheses about the potential nature, origins and drivers of this lack of change more broadly in western liberal culture.

Thus by engaging in the kind of deconstructive inquiry that, as Foucault (1972) envisaged, aims to “understand the origins of our current ways of understanding ourselves” so that “we can begin to question their legitimacy and resist them” (Burr, 2003, p. 78), I hope to contribute to existing critique regarding the powerful effects of western liberal culture’s attachment to dichotomy on the production and maintenance of the shortcomings in how illicit drug use and drug-using subjects can and cannot be understood. The findings are in keeping with Fraser’s (2015) most recent analysis of the problem of a lack of change in alcohol and drug policy. In applying Latour’s (2004, 2013) thinking to this problem, she raises questions about how alternatives to the current mess of inadequate, opposing models of policy and practice that we find ourselves in might emerge, concluding that:

It seems a significant shift is needed, one that Latour has identified many times now in general terms (2004, 2013), and that would alter society and policy beyond one field alone. If we reformulate our world, and our view of it, as a ‘multiverse of habits’, we can perhaps remake policy (and its expression in services) in new more flexible, less essentialising ways (p. 7).

She thus envisages the need for a shift that is bigger than this problem with how we understand and approach alcohol and illicit drug use – one which, in undoing our attachment to dichotomy, does not result in “multiple worlds with no hope of resolution” but rather which produces “the multiverse, a universe of complexity, instability, difference and nuance, one that recognises that ways of knowing make the realities they seek to know, and thus that realities are necessarily multiple” in which “we can engage in the

continuing task of ‘composing the common world’ (2004b, 222), creating a society, laws, policies and institutions, in a more ethical and effective manner” (pp. 3-4).

Critically however, in introducing questions about how Smith and Berg’s (1997) concept of stuckness may further explain the mess we find ourselves in, in particular about its unconscious affective origins and drivers, the findings of this research contribute to the growing call for critical work which also examines the potential role of unseen and unchallenged (i.e., unconscious) affective forces in the production of the acts and subjects of illicit drug use, or perhaps more importantly their role in preventing changes in how these behaviours and individuals are produced (Duff, 2015; Moore, Fraser, Törrönen, & Tinghög, 2015, p. 427; Hellman & Room, 2014). As Room, Hellman and Stenius (2015) reflect:

In modern societies—committed on the one hand to consciousness, attention, and conscientiousness in major social roles and on the other hand to free markets for consumer preferences as shaped by promotional enticements (Room, 2011)—the addiction concept functions as a comforting explanation, resolving the social system’s contradictions by pointing to a postulated defect in the individual, a failure in the expectation of self-control. It has been suggested that through the idea of addiction, human beings “understand what it means to be free” (Martin, 2013). As such, this explanatory concept is likely to remain in strong demand (pp. 33-34).

What hope have we, then, of moving on from this explanatory concept and its harmful effects if we do not address what drives it to be in such strong demand? What is contended here is that perhaps we need to expand our searches to for change to include consideration of the impacts of unconscious emotive processes such threat, fear and the corresponding desire for comfort. As perhaps the foregrounding of and capacity to learn to live differently with these unconscious affective forces might form part of what is required to produce the multiverse Fraser (2015) envisages and hence to finally bring about alternative, more ethical policies and practices. Indeed, what I have proposed here is that perhaps through a collection of intersecting, deep cultural disruptions to our attachment to dichotomy more effective ways to address the trenchant and enduring ways in which people who use illicit drug use are inadequately understood, stigmatised, marginalised and ultimately dehumanised, might emerge.

It is hoped therefore that the questions that have come out of this inquiry will generate further discussion about how change can come out of what appears to be such stuckness – that is, how change can come out of what appears to be such a longstanding pattern of repetition. Throughout this document I have often polarised repetition and change, in a manner that Fraser and valentine (2009) caution against for the way that it replicates how constructions of addiction valorise change over repetition (see also Seear & Fraser, 2010a). What Fraser and valentine (2009) emphasise is that instead of such polarisations we should acknowledge that in repetition lies opportunity for change; arguing that “it is repetition that opens up the possibility of change” as “many instances of repetition are also potential sites of rupture” (p. 169) and hence that “it is the centrality of repetition to the maintenance of social norms that renders them vulnerable” (p. 166). Importantly, it seems that this is what the examination of instances of repetition throughout this research show us – that the potential for change (i.e., the potential for rendering these longstanding constructions and their problematic outcomes vulnerable) can be found in moments of repetition, as what occurs in these moments is not the fixing or securing of the drug-using subject and the normative subject but rather a rupturing of these categories; specifically, a rupturing of their capacity to be realised.

Perhaps therefore our efforts would productively be spent engaging in further examination of the complex - potentially paradoxical and affective - processes that underlie each reproduction of inadequate, stigmatising and marginalising constructions of the acts and subjects of illicit drug use, as perhaps it is in these moments of repetition and rupture that the potential for change/movement and less limiting and harmful outcomes from what we know and do will emerge. Indeed, perhaps it is in these moments that new, more productive ways to address “very pronounced longing to respond to drug use in entirely different ways” (Fraser, 2015, p. 7) will emerge. At the very least, I hope that what this inquiry generates is further discussion about this longing for entirely different responses, as this was the most resounding message that I took from what the participants did, and did not, voice.

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Deconstructing Divergent Constructions of Illicit Drug Use

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